

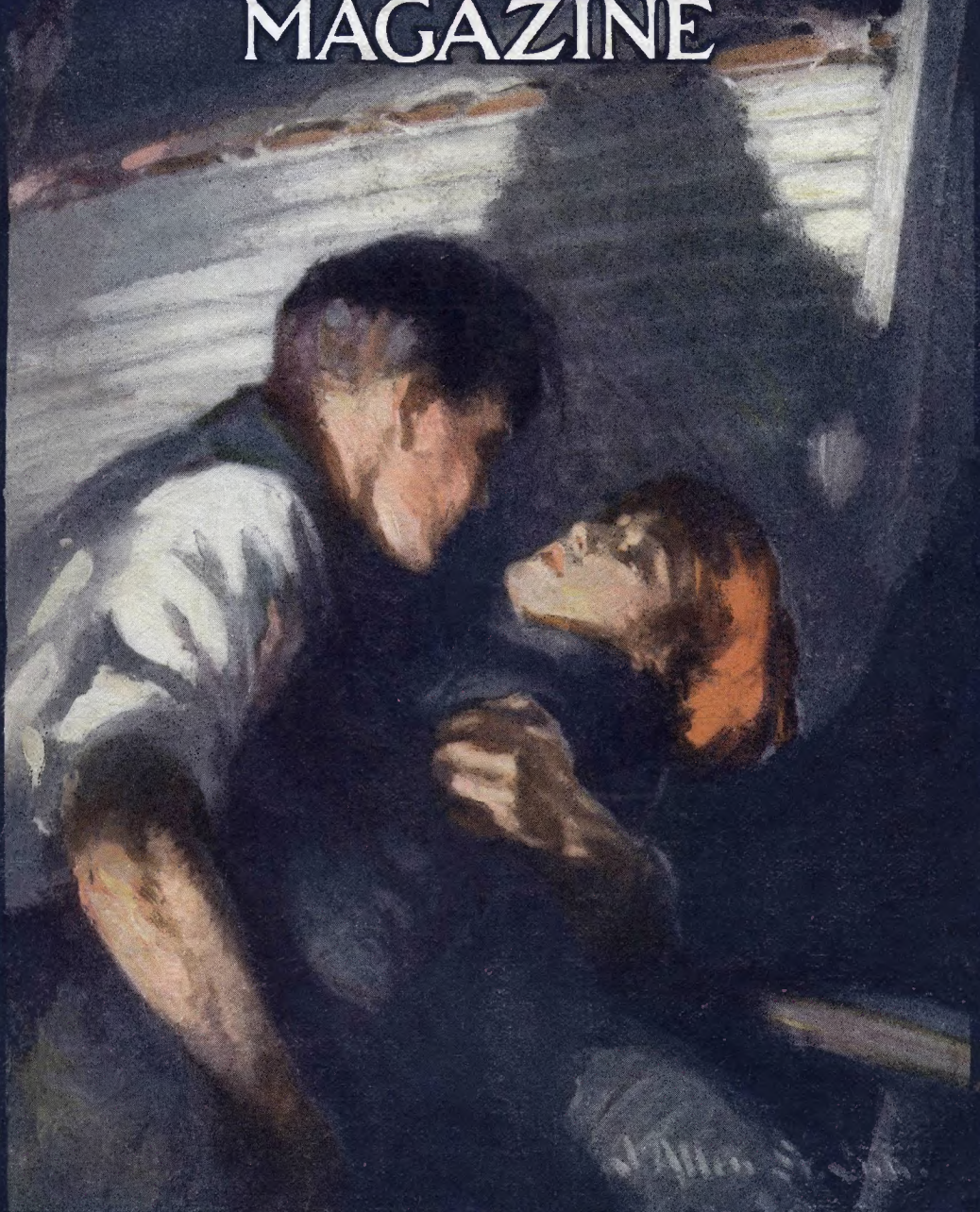
U.S.

PRICE 20 CENTS

APRIL 1920

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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IN THIS ISSUE : Beginning "Cross Currents"—a new novel; Edison Marshall, Chester T. Crowell, H. Bedford-Jones, George Worts, Elmer E. Ferris, George Allan England and others.



Don't Tell Children

- Don't say that Puffed Grains are scientific foods.
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- Or that every food cell is exploded so that every atom easily digests.
- Or that Puffed Wheat means whole wheat, rich in minerals which growing children need.
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For suppers or between meals float in bowls of milk.

Use as wafers in your soups. After school let children eat like peanuts, crisped and buttered.

Puffed Wheat

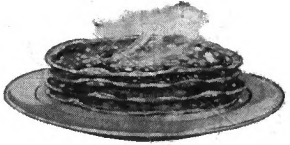
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Corn Puffs

Puffed Rice
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THE BLUE BOOK

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DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

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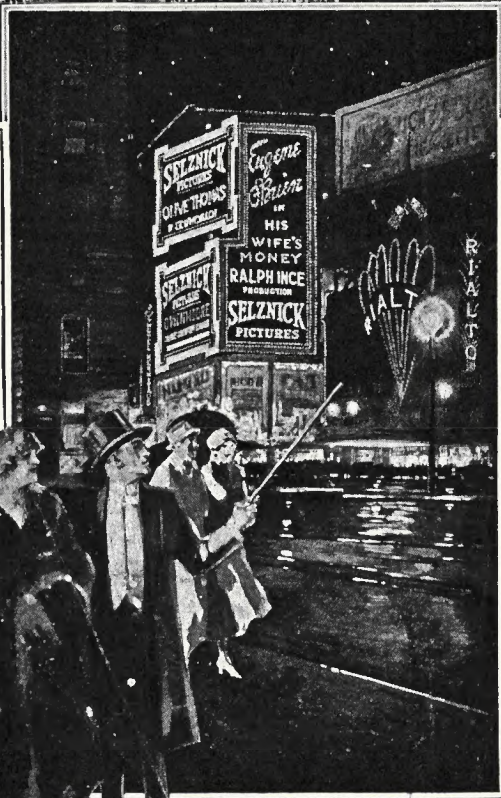
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Along the Great White Way



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AT THEATRES WHERE QUALITY RULES

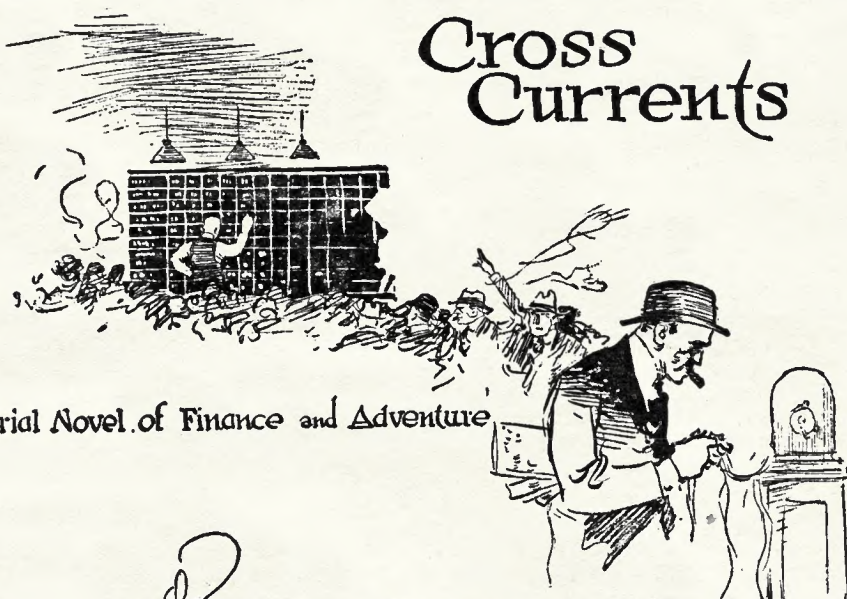
April

1920

THE
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MAGAZINE

Vol. XXX

No. 6



Cross Currents

A Serial Novel of Finance and Adventure

by John Law Dallam and Frank H. Collins

CHAPTER I

OUR first impressions of a place where we are to meet success and failure, joy and sorrow, are always vivid. To some these impressions spell Hope, to others Labor, but to Richard Mohun, standing on the upper deck of the ferryboat and watching the panorama of Manhattan unfold, the city spelled—Opportunity!

Only once before had he seen New York, and then as a casual visitor. Now it was to be his home, and now as then it lay there, long and never ending, beckoning, tempting, yet always formidable.

Dick was fourth of his name and last of the line. Generations ago a pioneer Mohun from North Carolina had crossed the mountains and built him a home on the Illinois prairie. There the family took root and turned farmers. But with the years the old pioneer spirit disappeared, contentment took the place of ambition. The Mohuns lapsed into an honest, industrious clan, content with the comfortable

prosperity of the corn belt. Into this narrow environment Dick was born. His boyhood was passed in a land of flatness over which the noise of the outer world seldom rolled. But for all his surroundings, and despite the unenergetic character of his father, the boy developed ambition. From beyond the horizon that the outer world whispered to him, something was always stirring within him that he could not explain, and he was frequently dissatisfied without knowing why. Dick entered the University of Chicago. The first two years of college were the happiest of his early life. The city took possession of him, and daily contact with a host of bright, energetic youngsters painted the corn belt in still more somber colors. At the end of his Sophomore year there was no spirit of the soil in Dick's ego.

That summer his father died.

WHEN all the somber formalities of the funeral were over; when the last eddies of dust from the last carriage wheel had settled once more upon the straight

main-travelled road, the young man looked the facts of life in the face.

No ties bound him to Farmington, the world lay open to him, his future was his own. Financially he found himself in very comfortable circumstances. Apart from the well-kept farm, his father had left an estate of some \$25,000, snugly invested, representing the work and honesty of several generations. And this result of honest, though colorless, work was now his. But Dick knew he could never be happy in the work that had claimed his father and grandfather; the farm and its homely noises were unspeakable boredom compared to the turmoil of the city.

So Dick sold the old home, closed up his affairs, and went to Chicago to earn a living.

Finance had always interested him at college, and naturally enough he gravitated to La Salle Street. Through the interest of a friend he found a position in a highly reputable though conservative banking house, and here for two years he absorbed the first principles of finance. It was a profitable time. Not only did he learn business methods, but what was more to the purpose, just then, he came to learn the morals of business. He saw the weak go to the wall and the strong forge to the front, the temporary success of the unscrupulous and the permanent success of the honest, and underlying all success and progress the cardinal fact that energy was useless unless well directed. And the more he saw of active business the more he became convinced that honesty was the foundation of all credit, and fair play an asset to be prized. Incidentally he learned that the prices of the city were not the prices of Farmington.

But despite his congenial surroundings Dick never was fully satisfied with his prospects. He soon found that the city, big and active as it was, occupied a minor place in the financial world compared to New York, that the big men were either bred by the Atlantic or gravitated to its shore as soon as they rose to some height of success. The eastern capital sang its siren song to him as it has to thousands of other young Americans, and before he had finished his first year on La Salle Street, Dick sighed for the larger city. He spent his first vacation there, and after that Chicago seemed small. The roar of Manhattan gripped him, the never ceasing tide of the place entered into every fibre

of his being and stirred him as he had never been stirred before. He determined to seek his fortune there if opportunity ever came.

OPPORTUNITY did. Some years before, a Farmington boy, one Billie Grayson, had attracted the attention of an enterprising Illinois banker. Mr. Sedley had progressed with the times, and progressing, drew Grayson with him. The ex-country-boy was now an assistant cashier in a New York national bank with his feet firmly planted on the ladder of success.

Dick and Grayson had not only been warm friends as boys, but they were cousins in some remote degree, and even the big city had not deadened the clan feeling in the older man. Thus when Grayson learned of the other's hope for a New York career he gladly offered to look for an opening. The chance came, and Dick once more, burned his boats and registered the certain for the indefinite.

To the experienced man of the world even New York does not look inviting in the gray of a December morning, but to the youthful adventurer on the ferryboat the jagged sky-line spoke of Romance and Opportunity—always Opportunity! The word had a good sound; paddle wheels threshed it upon the shipped water, the whistles of the tugs shrieked it, and those steel and concrete towers caught the word and threw it back on the wintry air—Opportunity! There it lay!

The boat found its slip and Dick Mohun stepped ashore; he had taken another step on the Road of Great Adventure.

THE evening of Dick's arrival he dined with Grayson at a hotel, surrounded by well-groomed men and richly dressed women. Music from a balcony above floated over the throng, and all around them was the atmosphere of luxury and the crackle of success.

"And now," said Grayson as the coffee was served, "let's get down to brass tacks! Ambrose and Company want a young man who is intelligent and can keep his mouth shut. As you've had a year or so on La Salle Street you know the importance of the last quality as well as I do."

Dick nodded.

"They are a strong house," Grayson resumed, "and a big one. They do a little of everything the rest of the Street does and do it a little better—that's why the firm

is a money-maker—and Henry M. Ambrose a millionaire. 'H. M.' is a director in my bank, the Drug and Chemical, you know, and he's on the board of half a dozen trust companies. He's been getting into railways lately, and he's a director of the Chicago, Omaha & Vancouver and the Ottawa, Winnipeg and Behring Straits. That's the one that he and 'Bull' Bullard took from the Smith crowd—you probably heard something of the fight."

Dick nodded again; here was Success!

"Oh, H. M. is something of a man," Grayson continued heartily, "and if you get this job, and I think you can, you'll be wearing diamonds in a year or two. As I wrote you, Mr. Ambrose needs a man in his own private office at Ambrose and Co. He has two or three secretaries of course, but this new man will do things these secretaries don't do. Things, I fancy, that H. M. wont entrust to the mail or phone. Get me?"

"Perfectly," Dick replied.

"It's a wonderful opportunity, Dick. I'd give my pants to have it, but at the start the salary will be so small I honestly couldn't afford it, even if Mr. Ambrose offered me the job—and that's the kernel of the nut—he wants a stranger that he can break in to suit himself, not some chap that's been in another office on the Street and imbibed some other fellow's methods; get me again, old scout?"

"Positively! And look here, Billie, I want to say right now that you've acted like a trump. It was mighty kind of you to take this trouble for me; I might be an awful hecker for all you know; you haven't seen me for two years."

"All right! You can put me into something some day. Now to get back to business! When I heard H. M. speaking to my chief about finding somebody, I thought of you immediately. I knew you were in earnest, by your letters, and I spoke to Mr. Ambrose at once. Of course the job isn't yours yet, but as long as he held it open until you could get here—why, your chances are splendid. Lord!" Grayson looked almost pensive for a second. "I wish I were in your shoes today—I'd make a fortune in five years."

DICK sipped the last of his coffee, and looked about the room. Then he turned to his friend.

"But about Mr. Ambrose—suppose he doesn't like me; where do I get off?"

"That's up to you! But I think you'll hit it off with him. You came up to specifications. You're young, you're supposed to be intelligent, and you haven't had enough training in an office to hurt you. H. M. can bring you up according to his own ideas."

"What sort of man is he personally?"

Grayson blew a smoke ring over the shaded candles; instinctively both men watched until it broke and dissipated with other smoke from a neighboring table.

"He's a quiet, unassuming man who'd pass anywhere in a crowd. You'd put him down as a club-man, or a dilettante in the arts, until you get talking business to him. Then"—the speaker made a gesture—"you're wise in a minute. He has one of those quiet manners with a lot of force behind it—iron hand in the velvet glove—and all that sort of thing. He generally gets his own way. He's supposed to be honest; the Street respects him, but he's a bit cold-blooded, I think. I don't mean he'd knife a friend for a dollar, but he wouldn't let sympathy stand in the way of a killing."

"I know the type," Dick volunteered. "Mr. Ambrose is married, I suppose?"

"A widower with two daughters; Mrs. Van Wikoff and Miss Martha. She is—"

Grayson apparently could find no words to express his appreciation of the youngest Miss Ambrose's charms.

"Pippin?" suggested Dick.

"A REAL pippin, thank you, Richard. I have met her, that's all. I don't know the people she goes with, but she's the real thing. I foresee a romance right here. Confidential clerk, beautiful daughter, runaway in the Park; 'bless you my children'—and orange blossoms! Oh, Youth! Youth!" Mr. Grayson lit another cigarette.

"See here, Dick," he resumed in his Wall Street voice, "have you any special qualifications that might help H. M.? Do you speak French or German for instance, or are you a shark on any special kind of securities, or anything of that kind?"

Dick shook his head.

"I'm sorry, not a thing. Of course I know something about the local Chicago securities, but I guess you men know as much as I do. I can only speak English, though I can read French a little—but I can take dictation," he added as an afterthought.

CHAPTER II

Grayson was delighted with this. "That's fine," he said. "By Jove, Dick, I see all kinds of possibilities for you. If you can take dictation for some of H. M.'s private letters there's no end to what you might do."

Dick looked and felt uncomfortable.

"I don't know," he said slowly, "if I'd be justified in using that kind of information to my own advantage."

The older man looked keenly at his cousin.

"So! Well, I wouldn't see it quite that way. It's not betraying secrets to another; it's only taking advantage of what you come across in the usual run of business."

"Probably you're right, Billie; I don't know much about it, haven't had a chance yet. Still I think—well—can I see Mr. Ambrose tomorrow?"

"I'll try to see him and I'll phone you at your hotel about lunch time. Be there, will you?"

"You bet! And, Billie, now we're on hotels, where in thunder am I going to live? I am not keen on hotels, and they simply eat up money."

"I'VE been thinking of that since I knew you were coming," Grayson hesitated a second. "Excuse me for asking," he said, "but how are you fixed financially, Dick? It's none of my business of course, but what do you want to pay for rooms? Can you stand fifty a month, or thirty? You see New York is a mixture of prices; you can live in this city as cheaply as you can anywhere in the world, or you can take off the roof and see no limit but the sky."

Dick thought for a moment.

"I'm pretty comfortably off," he said frankly, "that is, I could live all right without much salary, but I don't want to spend a lot on fancy rooms. I'd rather pay thirty or forty dollars and get in a decent neighborhood that wasn't fashionable and have something to spend outside, than to pay fifty or sixty and have to watch the other pennies."

"I see," said Grayson. "That's common sense. Let's go house-hunting Saturday afternoon. I think downtown is your best bet. We'll start there. It's an interesting old section. Does that suit you?"

"It does. And you'll phone me tomorrow if we can see Mr. Ambrose?"

"I will. Now let's beat it to the theater, they say the first act has a peach of a chorus."

THE firm of Ambrose and Company was the result of two generations of conscientious work, mediocre ability and a large social connection, plus a third generation of considerable financial insight and the craze of the American people.

Henry M. Ambrose had inherited a good deal of money; his desire for more was not original. He was one of that group of men who came to maturity in the late seventies, and willy-nilly, grew up in a changing and expanding age. Of those changes and expansions he took advantage.

At this period he was a little over fifty, a widower and the father of two daughters, Mrs. Arthur Van Wikoff—not to know whom was to argue one's self unknown—and Miss Martha Ambrose.

As for personal appearance, he was a slender, clean-cut man, with hair turning gray, and a shrewd pair of eyes. He always looked as if he had just stepped from the proverbial band-box, wore a close-fitting cutaway coat with a carnation in the button-hole, and a pair of eye-glasses with tortoise-shell rims, attached to a black-silk cord that hid itself somewhere beneath his waistcoat. He spoke in deliberate tones, save when much interested, and was thought to have a nasty temper when aroused.

Mrs. Van Wikoff was afraid of him, Martha was not; these traits were suggestive of the characters of the two women.

"SO!" said Mr. Ambrose, when the door had closed behind Billie Grayson, and Dick had been waved to a seat:

"My young friend Grayson tells me you wish to enter into banking and brokerage."

Dick acknowledged the truth of this statement.

"And how much do you know about the business?"

The young man's answer was short and to the point. "Very little, Mr. Ambrose."

Mr. Ambrose did not appear to be offended. He took off his glasses, balanced them on a pencil and twirled the crystals around its shaft, a habit he had when in a good humor.

"Sometimes that is better than thinking you know a great deal," he observed. Dick made no reply. Perhaps the applicant's silence pleased the banker more than words.

"I am inclined to give you a trial," he said deliberately. "I have a high opinion of Mr. Grayson's judgment, and a higher one of his employer, Mr. Sedley."

Dick's response was once more to the point.

"I shall try to make good, sir."

The older man nodded; the reply was stereotyped, but was short and rang true.

"As I understand it, you have had two years experience in a Chicago office, you are not yet twenty-five, you have presumably some knowledge of the workings of an office, and you have a little money of your own. Is all that correct?"

"Absolutely!" Dick answered. Then Mr. Ambrose, who had been regarding the glasses with affectionate interest, suddenly shot a quick look at the other and Dick noticed a glint in the gray eyes that had not been there before.

"Mr. Henderson in the outer office generally talks with our new employees," said Mr. Ambrose, "but your case is different. You will be employed by me as my personal assistant or private secretary. You can call yourself anything you please; secretary always sounds well to strangers, especially if they're from the country"—the speaker laughed grimly—"and your salary will be paid by me. The firm will have nothing to do with your honorarium. But at the same time you will be expected to make yourself useful to your superiors, if the occasion demands,—somebody in the office is always sick or away,—unless such requests should interfere with my plans. You understand me?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Very well! Now tell me, Mr. Mohun—by the way, how do you spell your name?"

Dick told him. The banker was a trifle surprised.

"It's not often," he said courteously, "that that old English name is pronounced the way it is spelled. Have your family always used that pronunciation?"

"You can search me," said Dick frankly. "My dear old father talked very little about our family. I guess they were a rather stupid crowd"—Dick smiled—"and we've been so long in Illinois that if we ever did have any eastern kin we've lost track of them."

MR. AMBROSE smiled in sympathy. "I happen to be very much interested in family names," he explained. "So

is my daughter, Miss Martha Ambrose; it's quite a hobby of hers. Well, to come back to business." He adjusted his glasses to the well-cut nose, and when he next spoke his tones were more formal.

"There is one thing that I always try to impress on those who enter my employ," he continued seriously, "and that is the absolute necessity of keeping silent about anything that transpires in the office. In plain English, keeping your mouth shut. I will have no one associated with me on whose discretion I cannot absolutely rely. If anyone connected with the firm so far forgets himself as to talk *outside* the office about what takes place *in* the office—and I find it out—I have but one redress. You understand me?" he concluded sharply.

"Perfectly," Dick answered for the second time. "My employers in Chicago impressed me with the same thing. Only"—and the young man's tone rose in self-defense,—"common sense would have given me the same advice."

Mr. Ambrose smiled and the glasses came back to the pencil.

"Good! Then we understand each other. I shall give you a trial. Your salary at the start will be one thousand dollars a year. If you prove valuable to me, and I'm sure you will after a short time"—no one could have said these words as benignly as Mr. Ambrose—"that salary will be raised. I am always glad to pay for value received. If you prove unsuited to the business or gauge the value of your time by the clock—but that I am sure is not a trait of yours—I shall have no hesitancy in asking for your resignation. But"—and he smiled again—"I do not expect that in your case. You will report Monday morning to me personally. And where are you living, Mr. Mohun?"

Dick gave the name of his hotel and volunteered the information that his stay there was only temporary. Mr. Ambrose seemed glad to hear it.

"Get some comfortable rooms in a respectable neighborhood as soon as you can. You will find it cheaper and more suitable."

He rose as if to end the interview, but Dick had something to say on his side.

"There is one thing, sir," he said quietly, "about which I would like to have a clear understanding now to avoid any question in the future. It is this: if I am entrusted with your confidence I will

in the course of business become possessed of certain information. Can I use that information for my own gain if I do it legitimately?"

MR. AMBROSE stared at him; in all the banker's experience with various employes not one had ever asked this question. But he was a shrewd man, and though momentarily surprised he grasped the fact that a young man who would thus deliberately lay all his cards upon the table might be trained into a most valuable servant. Mr. Ambrose seldom underrated friend or foe, and he was quick to recognize potential values in others. He thought for an instant and came to his decision.

"Sit down, Mr. Mohun."

Dick obeyed; had he known it, the next few minutes were to have a vast influence on his future. Mr. Ambrose once more put on the glasses, and when he spoke his tones were steady, even.

"I am glad you asked me that question; I shall try to treat you fairly. I have no objection whatever to your speculating; that is really what your question means, but all such speculation must be done through this office. That I insist on. Furthermore, I am willing to give you any advice that is in my power—only remember—no man is infallible in his judgment, even in the most advantageous circumstances. The slightest outside event may change the whole course of a campaign in stocks, let us say. The death of an influential man, for example, or a strike, or the attitude of Washington towards certain—ahem!—legislation."

He paused and looked keenly at his new clerk. Dick nodded comprehension.

"So you can speculate all you please," the banker continued. "I have no objections to your natural wish, only, you must not buy or sell a dollar's worth of any security that your hear mentioned in this office, without my sanction. When I tell you that such and such a letter or conversation is confidential—it is to remain confidential, no matter how much you may be tempted. Understand that fully; it is part of your duty towards me as your employer. You are not to take advantage of anything you hear or see in this office without my express permission. I have your assurance that such will be the case?" And he looked steadily at Dick as if to read the young man's inmost thoughts.

Dick bowed gravely. "You have my promise, Mr. Ambrose," he said.

The banker laid a hand on his shoulder. "Good!" he exclaimed cordially. "Now in return I may sometimes be in a position to favor your interests, and if I have found that your silence and discretion are to be relied upon, I may,"—Mr. Ambrose's voice was kindly,—"I may be able to do you a good turn. There! I am sure we understand each other!"

"I think so," Dick replied, and the interview came to an end.

Left alone, Mr. Ambrose glanced at the closed door, and something like a smile of satisfaction crossed his face.

"I believe," he murmured, "that boy may prove valuable—but"—he tapped a well-kept finger on the table—"will he always prove tractable? And where does he get that name and why does it seem so familiar?" He tapped the table with his glasses, then stared at the ceiling. Suddenly his face brightened. "I remember," he said; "the Mexican fellow!"

Then he dismissed Dick from his mind and pressed a button to summon his private stenographer.

SATURDAY afternoon proved a busy one for Dick and Grayson. Determining to start their search for rooms in the downtown section, they first consulted the morning papers. In these journals they found two columns of rooms to rent, while personal investigation discovered a wide choice of quarters which were unadvertised. Finally some bright, sunny rooms on West Thirteenth Street came to light, and here Dick settled.

The first few months of Dick's life in New York were but the duplicates of those spent by thousands of young men in the city. He had the great advantage of his own private income which allowed him many luxuries his contemporaries could not afford, but his daily work was as active and binding as that of any man of his age. Henry M. Ambrose was fair in his treatment of employees. He expected those about him to do their full share, but he was quick to reward services rendered.

At first the daily expenses of the office staggered Dick. He was new to New York habits, and it was some time before he grasped the fact that the huge overhead charges were really assets.

The head man in the bond department, as an example, drew a salary of fifteen

thousand a year. He was worth every cent of it, and there were a half-dozen salesmen who from sales and salaries made anywhere from five to ten thousand dollars annually. The floor broker employed by the firm was reputed to make at least twelve thousand a year from the Ambrose business alone, and all other expenses were in proportion. The rent of the downtown office was thirty-six thousand and the house had private wires to Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia. It was no wonder that Dick was appalled by the outlay. But he also grasped something of the immense profits of this well-conducted business in prosperous times. He saw the firm, sometimes with an associate, take over a complete bond issue at one figure, and dispose of the securities within a couple of months at a higher price. He saw new corporations formed, the stock listed and sold, and vaguely understood the profits Ambrose and Company made on the transaction. He witnessed the formation of pools, sometimes made over the telephone, and saw those pools hold together until their object was attained, with not one word of writing to bind the makers.

He had not been very long in the office before Mr. Ambrose began to use him as a buffer. One of the secretaries had formerly been entrusted with this tactful work, and it now became Dick's duty to stand between his employer and those people he did not wish to see. The work required good manners and experience; the first Dick had, the second came only with time.

FREQUENTLY scraps of conversation reached him that might have proved advantageous, and he heard the gossip of the customers' room, but paid little attention to what he heard, and devoted himself to his legitimate work.

This work fascinated him; he seemed to live in the center of a financial storm that blew and whirled about him; the office of Ambrose and Company was the vortex, and around it circled the flying clouds of good luck and bad, triumph and unhappiness. And always the chief retained his self-command; quiet in success, he was equally reserved in disappointment, and faced his own good fortune and that of his customers, as he viewed financial danger to himself or ruin to others. Dick realized what Billie Grayson had meant when he spoke of sentiment in business.

There was no sentiment in the office of Ambrose and Company; at the same time Dick saw only fair play, even if fairness at times seemed harsh.

DICK had just finished some dictation to a young and pretty stenographer, and had taken up a book on finance, when the private door opening on the corridor was flung wide, and an apparition in the shape of a young lady took possession of the office. She was barely twenty-one, so Dick judged; she was extraordinarily good-looking, with a mass of rich brown hair which she wore most becomingly, a pair of honest brown eyes that looked the world squarely in the face, a nose that had just a suspicion of a tilt, and a carriage that suggested the sweep and freedom of the links. Her close-fitting tailored gown of some rich and rough brown cloth, with a hat to match, and well-fitting, sensible shoes capped by gray spats, to say nothing of a set of handsome furs, all made a picture that Ambrose and Company could have seen daily without fatigue.

Dick sprang to his feet. He had a shrewd suspicion who his visitor was; no one save a person speaking as one in authority could have entered the office in the way this young woman did.

Hollins on "Amortization of Second Bond Issues" tumbled to the floor and for a moment lay unnoticed.

The lady of the furs came directly to the point: "I am Miss Ambrose. Is my father in?"

Dick was forced to admit that Mr. Ambrose was in, but was engaged. Twenty-one promptly took a chair and loosened the furs.

"I'll wait," she declared calmly. "Don't look disturbed, I'm accustomed to wait in this office; every time I come to see father I have to wait hours."

"I don't think Mr. Ambrose will be engaged very long," Dick volunteered. "May I get you an afternoon paper?"

"I'd rather have a glass of water," Miss Ambrose confessed, "the dust today is dreadful."

He brought her the water and she drank it with a healthy enjoyment. Then she scanned the young man with interest.

"Are you Mr. Mohun?" she asked courteously. "Father has mentioned your name."

Dick acknowledged the name, and remained standing.

"Oh, please sit down. I may be here weeks if I know father—what's the book?"

Before he could anticipate her, she had risen, taken two steps and picked up the volume; every movement she made shouted of her buoyant young health.

"Hollins—on 'A-mor-ti-zation!' Goodness, that's a big word. What's it mean, Mr. Mohun?"

"That," answered Dick gravely, "is what I'm trying to find out. I'll tell you a secret, Miss Ambrose; I don't understand it. Your father told me to study it, and I'm obeying—but it's very technical and full of figures—I'm lost—"

Miss Ambrose laughed; a laugh so contagious that the pretty stenographer over in the corner laughed also.

The daughter of the private office looked at the young woman and smiled cheerfully.

"I seem to be making new friends today," she declared. "First I find you, Mr. Mohun, at Mr. Osborne's desk, and now a young lady I never saw before in Miss Bradley's place. Where is she, by the way—don't tell me she has married that insurance man!"

The stenographer laughed again.

"She's going to, Miss Ambrose."

The visitor shook her muff in the air. "Oh," she ejaculated, "I'm disappointed. He has sheep's eyes and never looks anybody in the face. I fear for Miss Bradley's future. Twice I've seen that young man, and each time he seemed scared to death; I must have had a sad effect on him. Do you think I'm very terrifying, Mr. Mohun?"

Dick was about to reply when the door of that inner office opened, and out came Colonel Powhatan Harrison of Fredericksburg, Virginia, Mr. Ambrose and a third man Dick did not know.

But Miss Ambrose evidently knew the Virginian well, for she greeted the fine-looking old man with genuine warmth. As for Colonel Harrison, he bent over her hand with a grace and dignity that Dick envied.

"My dear Miss Ambrose,"—his voice boomed throughout the building—"I certainly am glad to see your face again after these long winter months. I said to Mrs. Harrison that if I could only see Miss Martha, just a little glimpse, my trip No'th would be fully repaid, even if her"—he bowed to Mr. Ambrose—"financial giant of a father should refuse to help my little railroad."

Miss Ambrose was still smiling, and Dick suddenly discovered an adorable dimple.

"And how is Mrs. Colonel?" she asked, "and all the little kernels? And how is the Rappahannock & Western?"

"Mrs. Colonel is lovelier and more alluring than ever. She is like our Virginia-creeper, Miss Martha, as the years pass the more beautiful does she become. And the little kernels are all well, save granddaughter Murray, who has the whooping cough; and our railroad is very well. Would you believe it, Miss Martha, Number Two got in on time last month three days in one week, and the 'short dog' was only two hours and ten minutes late, all owing to the positive genius"—he motioned to his companion—"and untiring efforts of our General Manager. Permit me, Miss Martha; Mr. Lucius Clay Spofford, son of my old and dear friend, Judge Henry Spofford." And Mr. Spofford bowed as gracefully as the Colonel had.

"I must apologize for our hurried departure," the Colonel boomed, "but you No'th'ners are so curious about keeping appointments to the minute—and we have an appointment. I wish you good-by, my dear young lady, and I look forward to seeing you again; I am happy to see you know my young friend Mr. Mohun, for whom I have a high personal regard—Mr. Ambrose, I will do myself the honor of calling upon you tomorrow."

So the Colonel departed carrying his silvered head with the bearing of a boy of twenty.

"Tiresome old bore!" snapped Mr. Ambrose, forgetting himself for the minute. But Martha was up in arms in an instant:

"Father! How can you? Why, he's the dearest old man in the world."

Mr. Ambrose snorted; he was evidently out of patience. "Is he?" he retorted, "wait until you—" Then he remembered himself and simmered. "Well, Martha, what is it?"

Martha drew herself up to her full five feet five.

"I've been insulted," she cried indignantly, "and I want you to punish the man."

"Dear me!" said her father politely. "Who insulted you, Martha?"

"A person who calls himself Mr. Victor Darnell, Corresponding Secretary of the American Society for Genealogical Research."

"And who in thunder is—no—the name's

too long. What did he do? I'm very busy this afternoon."

"Do!" Martha at this instant was not unlike a pouter pigeon. "Do? Why he has the audacity to say I can't get into the Daughters of Magna Charta Signers through Sir Ambrose Ambrose, because he is not my lineal ancestor, but only a collateral."

Her father waxed impatient.

"I've told you a dozen times," he said, "that Sir Ambrose Ambrose was only a cousin; he was the cousin of your great-great-grandfather and as such is no direct ancestor of ours. Really, Martha, you're very stupid at times. If the man was rude to you—why, Mr. Mohun here—oh! Martha, this is my secretary, Mr. Mohun—will go with you and punch his head or do anything you want—good-by—I'm very busy—" And the irate father disappeared once more into his hole of holies.

DICK kept his composure, but was hard put to it. Martha was very pretty and very indignant; the combination was hard to withstand. For a moment she stood stock still, the tapping of an angry little foot being the only movement. Then the storm dissipated as quickly as it had risen.

"Now that's what I call a provoking father," she cried. "How should I know that old Sir Ambrose was only a cousin—but now I think of it, I believe father did say so, but only once and that was a long time ago. I guess I forgot. Oh, dear!" Martha was most repentant. "And I did get mad at that snippy Mr. Darnell—Mr. Mohun, do you want to punch somebody's head?"

"Lead me to him," replied Dick, in most amiable tones.

"Then punch mine, I deserve it—or take me to the car—whichever you choose; I'm so stupid this afternoon I'm liable to mistake the town car for a roadster."

They walked down the corridor to the entrance of the building. Dick found the car, and wrapped the robes around her. She was a pretty picture as she sat there that gusty afternoon, and many a passer-by shot an admiring glance at her. She leaned over the door. "Good-by, Mr. Mohun; I'm very glad to have met you. I hope I'll have the pleasure of seeing you soon again—and then—I won't be such a goose. Will you please tell father the limousine will come for him? Home, Gordon!"

APRIL came warm and sunny and found Dick pleased with himself and his work, and found New York gay and contented, with the man of the streets making money and spending it. Wall Street was busy and seemingly sound to the core, but trouble was blossoming, and those who dreaded it the most were the very ones who had planted the seeds.

Wall Street, Broad Street and Lower Broadway, slow to convince themselves, and slower to convince others; reluctant to abandon certain gigantic schemes of their own initiation, and still more reluctant to acknowledge such abandonment to that outside world on which they waxed fat, had, during the past few weeks, become suspicious and somewhat fearful.

One by one the big men of this steel and concrete world—this world of cañon streets and a rushing tide of false and inflated prosperity, this world of easy money and negotiable securities—had slowly drawn in those stretching tentacles that had stretched too far, and were now striving to creep back into their crevices and make safe and sure for the coming storm.

For a storm was coming; they knew it.

American Finance in its broadest sense is a top-heavy structure on a slippery base. It is like those Chinese pagodas of playing-cards which as children we built in the nursery; a wall here, a roof there, another story added, a slip, just a little slip, and—disaster. So Finance!

A system constructed, an amalgamation planned, the money promised, success in sight, a slip, and—catastrophe.

HENRY M. AMBROSE was one of those men who feared the slip; he had seen slips before this and knew the appearance of dangerous ground when he saw it. He was not a superman, nor was he included in that little circle of financiers who swayed the financial world with a nod; but he, and a dozen like him, were on the rim of that circle, always trying to find an opening through which to creep into the very heart. And if he was not a superman, he was at least a man with a very definite idea of what was best for himself, and a shrewd idea as to what he owed others.

On this April morning he was as suave and collected as ever, and the face he showed to the men gathered round his desk was not that of a man in terror.

The bell on Dick's desk sounded and he at once responded. He found his chief in earnest conversation with the two partners, Mr. Hollingsworth and Mr. Van Wikoff, and to his utter amazement the fourth man was no less a person than Theophilus I. Bullard, commonly known as "Bull."

Mr. Bullard's presence was significant; he was as big a man financially as he was physically, and people generally went to see him. Why he had seen fit to come here unheralded was not in Dick's province, and incidentally he must have reached the private office through that seldom-used door on the corridor.

Mr. Ambrose handed Dick a piece of paper on which were scribbled some cabalistic signs.

"Go to the customers' room," he said sharply, "and get the latest quotations on those. Stay there ten minutes and watch the ticker. Keep your eyes open and have Mr. Henderson post you—then come back."

Dick found the customers' room buzzing with excitement. The ticker was clicking vigorously, four boys were hard at work on the board, the operator at the telephone switchboard was keyed to the highest point of attention as messages were flashed in and out. Mr. Henderson, in charge of the room, was being deluged by questions from nervous customers. Selling orders were coming over the wires and from the men who sat before the board; young Loomis, acting as order clerk, stood by his chief's side, his hands filled with slips, taking the commissions of a dozen frantic men. Messengers flew in and out, and wild-eyed men whom Dick had never seen before begged advice and information.

THE board told the news; the whole market was off from five to ten points. Dick compared his slip with the little blocks the boys shifted so rapidly, and was astonished to see the shrinkage in certain securities that last night had been deemed veritable rocks of Gibraltar. He made his memo and then managed to snatch a few words with Loomis.

"What's doing?" he demanded.

"Hell's a-poppin'," was the cheerful answer. "The Supreme Court handed down their decision in the Louisiana Cottonseed Co. case at ten today; it's adverse, and the whole market's skedaddling in sympathy—all right, Mr. Brown, see Mr. Henderson, please!"

"But look at it," said Dick excitedly, "there's Steel common down $8\frac{1}{2}$, no, $8\frac{3}{4}$ points; Manganese Steel & Iron off $10\frac{3}{4}$, and Chilled Saws preferred down 12 points—and there's Lake Superior Waterways off $6\frac{1}{4}$, and—Manhattan—by Jove!—a full five points—no, six; what the devil's the matter, Loomis, why should these industrials and common carriers be affected by a cotton decision?"

"Sympathy, my dear boy, sympathy," replied Mr. Loomis proudly from his vantage of three years seniority. "A decision like this Louisiana thing knocks the spots out of everything in general—What is it, Mr. Ralston?"

There was a lull in the confusion for an instant, and there came the tense, high-pitched voice of the phone operator: "Mr. Stanley wanted! Number 1, Mr. Stanley! Mr. A. J. Harris! Mr. A. J. Harris! Take that table phone, Mr. Harris, please. Mr. Armstrong, Mr. James H. Armstrong! Is Mr. Armstrong here this morning?"

Again the buzz of many bees! The ticker never ceased; impersonal and cold, it coughed and whirred and spat the uneven tenor of its way, and the white tape twisted and curled into the basket like the treacherous snake it was. Then arose the raucous voice of the boy who read its messages:

"Thomas K. Drake died at eleven-twenty this morning," chanted this voice, as if its owner was proud to be the announcer of such news.

A man suddenly got up from the rear row of chairs and hurried out. Dick got one look at the man's face; it was enough! Another man, a fat, pudgy-faced man, with the looks of a high liver, turned pale beneath the florid, vein-distended face, and Dick saw a note-book consulted. Then he too waddled into the front office.

"Fears his margins," Dick thought.

Then he heard scraps of conversation from the watchers of the board.

"Guess his death's been discounted." "Hear Castle & Co. are heavily in Manhattan." "Ah! They're strong enough to weather anything." "So old Drake's dead—wonder if he'll get any mercy where he is now—he never showed any here."

Once more the boy at the tape gloated. "Hansard and Co. unable to meet their obligations. Mr. Hansard states all obligations will be met in full, only time must be given to realize on certain investments. Takes this step to protect his creditors."

The hive was alive now; the swarm buzzed and buzzed, and from corner to corner, and from floor to ceiling swept the hum:

"That's the first!" "Who are Hansard and Co.?" "Young firm; cotton mostly." "Don't you remember old Robert M. Hansard; his son." "Loaded up with Watson and Co.'s paper, I heard yesterday." "Bad business this morning, boys! Here's where I pocket my losses and get out."

There was another rush towards Mr. Henderson, but he was equal to it.

"Mr. Adams, you know just as much about it as we do this morning! No, we can't advise you, surely you know that; no, if we need more margin you will be promptly notified. What's that, Mr. Pawlings? Oh! You'll buy and average; very good, yes, ten per cent, no, better make it fifteen for a week till we see how things go—Mr. Loomis will take your order. Now, Mr. Smith, don't ask the impossible—Ambrose and Co. aren't mind-readers—yes—I think Mr. Drake's death has been somewhat discounted by the Street, but nobody can control this market for the minute. Hello! Stanley. Yes, they've gone crazy at Washington, that man in the White House is to blame—the Attorney General would never have acted by himself—why don't they leave things alone—"

Dick took a last look at the board and went back to Mr. Ambrose. And even as he hurried over the tiles of the corridor, past elevator-shafts and the plate-glass of the big bank across the way, past men scampering here and hastening there, he still seemed to hear the gloating voice of that bad-mouthed boy, the insistent buzzing of the bees, and the clicking of the ticker as it spelled the ruin of Hansard and Co. Who Hansard and Co. might be, he knew not; but somewhere, perhaps just around the corner, there would be a white-faced man locked in the privacy of his office—and somewhere, perhaps far uptown, or over on Long Island, or across the Hudson in some Jersey town, a pale-faced woman, a wife, a mother, sick with anxiety and hope deferred, waited the sharp tinkle of the telephone, yet dreading to hear the well-known voice that told of another sacrifice on the altar of the great god Success.

HE found the four men as he had left them. Mr. Ambrose's face was slightly pale, but he was cool and collected.

Mr. Hollingsworth stood by the window looking out over the area, his lips pursed for a whistle that did not come; Mr. Van Wikoff, the junior member of the firm, and somewhat overshadowed in his position as son-in-law of the head of that firm, sat moodily in a chair listening to the expletives of "Bull" Bullard.

The last named was not nervous, but he was mad. Dick had heard of the famous rages of the "Bull," now he saw one. The man's dominant, aggressive face was purple; a fat, coarse hand beat upon the black leather of the desk as he shouted defiance and advice.

"So," he bellowed, as Dick entered, "old Drake's gone, has he? Well, I hope he's burning in hell now, that's the proper place for him—we'll see who'll play the ducks from now on—not me, by God! Where are those quotations—" he grabbed them from the secretary's hand. "—Ha! everything down and still going—Hansard and Co.—who are they? It's time for us to get busy, Ambrose. We'll support everything except the specials; you think so, don't you? So do I! Let's see what Castle thinks about it; get him on the phone, somebody!"

Dick took the instrument.

"Mr. William H. Castle—personally—please. Mr. Bullard!" He waited a second. "Hello! Mr. Castle?" and swung the phone.

"That you, Castle?" roared the "Bull." "Yes, Bullard! Oh, nothing to sweat over, but I'm going to support. You'll come in—all right! Who do you say? Crawford and Co.! Hells, bells and bubbles! D'ye hear that, Ambrose? Crawford's gone! What—oh! Mexico! Serves him right for dabbling there. Then you'll support—all along the line—in lots of five hundred—that's what I'll do, so'll Ambrose! Yes! If it gets worse we'd better meet tonight and settle what to do. I'll let you know later. I'm at Ambrose and Co.'s now."

He thumped the receiver on the hook, and glared savagely at the other men.

"Castle will support—so get busy! If this keeps up we'll meet tonight and prepare for tomorrow. Where'll we meet? Can't go to Castle's house, or mine, or yours, Ambrose; reporters will be on the job after four—how about your home, Van Wikoff?"

"Certainly," answered the junior member in his pleasant voice in which there

still lingered a trace of the so-called Harvard accent. "Come to my house—I think there are some people coming to dinner, but I'll get away. Make it nine o'clock."

"Nine it is," said Mr. Bullard, rising. "And somebody bring a stenographer along, we'll have lots of notes to make—and I can't trust any of my people these days—" he added.

Mr. Ambrose nodded.

"I'll attend to that," he said.

"All right!" and Bullard was at the door. "Unless you hear from me, Van Wikoff's at nine. In the meantime"—he shook a menacing forefinger—"support the market unless you want all hell to break loose—I'll see Castle."

The door banged behind him, and his heavy tread was heard in the corridor. The men unconsciously drew a breath of relief, and Van Wikoff voiced the sentiments of all.

"Of all the vulgarians in New York," he volunteered, "that man is the worst. I know he's necessary. I know he's a power, but I hate to do business with him he's so-so—" The speaker was at a loss for a word. "So omnipresent," he concluded.

Mr. Hollingsworth uttered a thin, sibilant sigh of assent; he was a hatchet-faced man who concealed a kind heart behind a lowering face.

"I'll go front and watch things," he said. "I fancy Bullard is right—what do you think, Ambrose, shall I order Miles and Stroud to buy?"

"Yes!" The head's tones were decisive. "Especially Manhattan—Metropolitan and General Traction—we're carrying long lines there. Have Miles start with one-hundred-share lots and work up to three-hundreds—if he has to—never mind Mr. Bullard and his five-hundreds; we'll attend to our own business. Be quick, Holly! Every minute counts now, and if there's a recovery we'll get out nicely."

The two younger men darted out, and Dick and his employer were alone. The banker tapped restlessly on the desk, and for a little while did not speak. Then he looked at his assistant.

"Your first experience in a bad market," he commented grimly.

Dick acknowledged this.

"You'll see it worse before it's better," the banker went on. "Drake's death is bound to have some effect, and this damn"—it was the first time Dick had ever heard him swear—"Supreme Court

decision will make every amalgamation in the land uneasy. Why did the President stick his nose in—" He stopped abruptly and shot one of his keen glances at Dick.

"Aren't you glad now," he demanded, "that you're not in that—" and he waved toward the front of the building. Dick nodded a hearty assent.

"And remember,"—Mr. Ambrose was stern,—“not a word about what goes on tonight; it's a matter almost of life and death."

"I understand, Mr. Ambrose," and Dick spoke with dignity.

"I'm sure you do, but the best of us are inadvertent at times. Give me your phone-number."

Dick gave him the Thirteenth Street phone-number, and added another. "That's the restaurant where I'll be at seven," he said. "It's a nice little café just around the corner from where I live—O'Connor is the name."

"We must put you in a club," the banker said affably. "Now go and stay in that office of yours and be careful who you let in; I don't want to be disturbed this morning. When I ring, send in that girl stenographer; I never can remember her name."

LEFT alone, Mr. Ambrose found a cigarette and smoked slowly. To anyone who knew his characteristics the cigarette was a sure sign he was disturbed. For some minutes he sat quietly at the desk drawing meaningless figures on the blotter. Twice he stretched a hand out to his phone, thought better of it, and resumed his figures. Then still smoking he walked to the window and looked idly out on the areaway, but there was nothing in the roof of the power plant to reward his thoughts. He threw away the cigarette, and going to his private safe took out a small ledger. In this he found an entry, looked at it with contempt, and drew a line across it with red ink. Then he slammed the cover viciously.

"Damn Crawford," he said bitterly, "I told him he was a fool to go into Mexico—and I was a fool to stay with him—I might have known—well, that's gone, I suppose; how many more of these knocks am I going to stand? And yet it looked good—I believe it's good yet—Mexico—and why the devil do I associate Mexico with young Mohun? Oh, of course—the other fellow!"

In the outer office Dick waited. No ring came for Miss Seldon but there was a procession of people who clamored to see Mr. Ambrose, and not one of them got past the door.

Mr. Hollingsworth came and went, and Mr. Van Wikoff slipped in twice, but always by the corridor door; and twice Dick heard the banker use his individual phone; but still no ring came for Miss Seldon, and still the young man and the young woman sat there waiting for what might befall.

CHAPTER IV

DICK reached Mr. Van Wikoff's home a little before nine. The junior member lived in that popular section east of Fifth Avenue and north of Sixtieth Street. The house resembled a sardine box on end, being all length and height and no width. But narrow as it was there was room for his very charming wife, two brown-haired little pagans of four and six, a yellow cat of uncertain age but proved disposition, and two Airedales of long pedigree.

The servant had taken Dick's hat and stick and was about to show him upstairs, when from the room on the right of the hall Miss Martha Ambrose stepped into view. If she had been an attractive young woman in street garb, she was doubly so, dressed for the evening.

Her rich brown hair, worn neither too high nor too low, was an attractive contrast to the white purity of her neck and arms, a purity however that lacked any suggestion of pallor. As a matter of fact the girl was fairly bounding with health and vitality.

"How do you do?" she said warmly. "Are you coming to my sister's party? How nice!"

Dick was forced to acknowledge the reason for his presence. "Official business," he said gloomily, "with Mr. Van Wikoff and your father." He might have said more had he not suddenly noticed the presence of a young man standing back of the curtains.

"Oh, skittles!" said the girl, at which a noise seemingly a cross between a cough and a snort came from the room.

"Come in, Mr. Mohun. Do you know Mr. Amerton—Mr. Mohun?"

Mr. Amerton was a thin young man about thirty. He had yellow hair which

he wore plastered down on a well-shaped head; a wisp of a mustache and a gun-metal wrist-watch. His evening clothes were of an exaggerated cut, and a gardenia adorned his buttonhole.

Despite his rather effeminate appearance Dick had heard him well spoken of as a shrewd business man. He was the son of Gilbert Amerton, of whom everybody had heard.

"How-de-do!" said Mr. Amerton in response to Dick's bow; Martha remembered afterward that the men made no motion to shake hands.

"Wont Father and Arthur excuse you from official duties, Mr. Mohun? If Mr. Van Wikoff leaves that party upstairs—hear them"—a peal of laughter came from the dining-room on the second floor—"there will be only eleven to play, and we want three tables. You play bridge, don't you?"

"I can make a bluff at it, Miss Ambrose, but—oh! awfully sorry—it's business for me tonight."

"Business!" Martha tossed the brown head. "Whenever I want any of my men-friends to do something in the afternoon, it's always 'business.' If it keeps up this way, and you men have your nights taken up by old business—why, we can *never* have any parties."

"There was a busy market today," Mr. Amerton suggested, with a sidelong glance at Dick. "No wonder Mr.—I beg pardon, I didn't quite catch the name—ah! Mohun! Thanks! No wonder Mr. Mohun, Van Wikoff and your father are busy this evening. 'Bull' Bullard coming?" he suddenly asked.

Dick was silent, but he looked at the man as if to indicate it was not his business.

"Beg pardon," drawled Amerton. "Very rude of me, I'm sure—didn't think for the minute."

Then Mr. Van Wikoff came in and greeted his visitors, and at the same time a motor purred at the curb and Mr. Ambrose arrived.

Dick said good night to Martha and got a cheery smile in return; Mr. Amerton nodded curtly. As the host led the way upstairs, Dick got a glimpse of a table shining under the shadowed glare of the electrics, and a number of men and women sipping their after-dinner coffee. A cloud of tobacco smoke floated into the hall, and the voice of a man saying:

"I'm afraid poor old Lanning was badly hit today."

Dick noticed that Mr. Van Wikoff smiled a little, but he said nothing.

"I'll be back in a few minutes, just want to get these people started playing. Make yourselves at home; try those cigars, Mohun, I can recommend them."

THE room was a library, and having lighted a very good cigar, Dick made a tour of inspection among the books. Mr. Van Wikoff's taste seemed both standard and catholic; Thackeray and Dickens were cheek by jowl with Buckle and Adam Smith; Darwin and Renan rubbed shoulders, and a Boydell Shakespeare stood alongside Gibbon.

"Mr. Van Wikoff is a great reader," said Mr. Ambrose, noticing the young man's interest. "Had he not been more or less destined for banking, he might have been a student. Are you fond of books?"

"Very," Dick answered.

"They are good friends sometimes, but"—the banker shrugged his shoulders—"there seems to be so little good literature today. So much of this socialistic stuff that only disturbs the workingman and unsettles things. Sometimes I think—"

But what Mr. Ambrose thought of modern literature, Dick was never to learn, for Mr. Van Wikoff ushered in Mr. Bullard and a much older man, the famous William H. Castle. Dick looked at him with interest. He was a thin, insignificant-looking man in a shabby frock coat, a waistcoat cut very low, and a bow tie. He might have been taken for a retired clergyman, rather than the daring speculator that he was. "Bull" Bullard wore a dinner coat, and in his shirt-front glared a single large ruby. It was as garish as the man.

The greetings were short and uneffusive. Though Bullard had never been in the house before, such a trifle did not worry him, and he took command as a field marshal.

"Let's get to business," he directed. The men sat around the center table while Dick took a chair to one side.

"No one can overhear us, Van Wikoff?" and Bullard's voice was a shade lower than usual.

"No! Shall I close the door?"

"No!" Mr. Castle's tones were decisive; he was a fresh-air crank and suffered from dyspepsia. "Let it stay open.

We are in Mr. Van Wikoff's house, not a café, Mr. Bullard."

The other man grunted; he was somewhat afraid of old Castle. Wishing to avenge the snub, he tried a victim in Dick.

"This young man," he growled, glancing at the stenographer, but speaking to Mr. Ambrose, "is in your employ, isn't he? He understands he has to keep his mouth shut?"

The man's tone rather than the words nettled Dick. He was about to reply, when Mr. Van Wikoff saved him from any indiscretion.

"Mr. Mohun is Mr. Ambrose's trusted employee; he is also a gentleman, Mr. Bullard."

Dick looked gratefully at the speaker, but Bullard only grunted again. A dramatic interruption prevented any further bickering. Hurried steps were in the hall, and a panting servant appeared at the door.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Van Wikoff, sir," gasped the man, "but Mr. Harvey Lanning has called, sir, and insists on seeing you. He is very much excited, sir, and wont—" he broke off, and glancing over his shoulder uttered an exclamation. A good-looking man with a light overcoat over his evening clothes, pushed the servant aside and burst into the room. His face was pale from excitement or distress, his lips quivering, his voice agitated.

"Van!" he cried. "Forgive me for bursting in on you this way, but my God, man, I can't stand it another minute!"

"Close that door!" roared Bullard, and the servant retreated, closing the door behind him. Lanning tried to master himself, but failed miserably.

"Van!" he cried again, and the appeal in his voice was pitiable. "Van—for God's sake don't sell me out—I was notified late this afternoon—it's only ten thousand, Van, but it's all I have in the world. And I can't raise the margins; I've been everywhere this afternoon trying to find the money, but you know how things are today. Carry me this once, Van, for God's sake help me—I—" He stopped as if shot, leaned against the wall, his breath coming in short jerks, and looked appealingly at his friend.

Mr. Ambrose's voice rang through the library, a cold, hard voice that Dick did not recognize.

"Mr. Lanning!" it rang. "I am surprised at you, sir, breaking in on a private con-

ference in this manner. You have behaved unpardonably, sir; I must request you to withdraw at once. I am sorry for your financial troubles, but they are matters between ourselves and not for others. Be so good as to leave, sir!"

Dick winced. The expression on Lanning's face was the saddest he had ever seen. Black and utter despair stared from it, hope had fled and youth had gone; remained only—Lanning was trying to talk—

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ambrose, and yours, gentlemen—I'm not myself this evening—I—I was married only three months ago—" he added simply.

"I regret," said Mr. Ambrose coldly, "that you should see fit to bring sentiment into a business transaction—I regret that Ambrose and Company took your account. Again I ask you to leave—and at once!"

The man pulled himself together by a great effort. He bowed, and stepped to the door. There he turned and held out a hand. "Forgive me, Van," he said with some dignity, "but you—you understand!"

Mr. Van Wikoff laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Come here tomorrow morning," he said kindly. "We'll go downtown together—and maybe we can find a way out. Come, Harvey!" and he held the door open.

In silence the two passed out. In silence the men at the table looked at each other. Then Mr. Ambrose saw fit to apologize for the occurrence.

"I am sorry that you were bothered by that young man's hysterics; had I known he was of this type, Ambrose and Company would not have taken him as a customer—but he is an old friend of my son-in-law—and he has presumed upon that friendship."

"Was he caught today?" asked Mr. Castle.

"Yes, and he needs only a few thousand for margins—but apparently he can't raise them—his people are poor."

"Oh, sell him out!" said Bullard impatiently. "Customers who can't take their losses like gentlemen, or who haven't the money, aren't wanted in Wall Street. Pikers!"

Mr. Ambrose nodded, while Mr. Castle produced a box of capsules and swallowed one with relish.

"I trust Mr. Van Wikoff wont so far forget himself," he said acidly, "as to be moved by that foolish young man. Such

an action would be highly out of place in business, especially at a time like this when we must all keep our heads."

"I trust not," and Mr. Ambrose was cold as Fate. Dick's heart grew sick within him; was this the man he had grown to like and admire? Was the sorrowful sight they had just seen a daily happening? Was this Success? Surely a few thousand dollars— Mr. Van Wikoff reentered the room, his face a little flushed; from below there floated up a woman's voice:

"Oh, partner! How delightful—they didn't get a trick."

"Bull" Bullard rose and shut the door. "Now that the hysterics are over—let's get to business. Mr. Castle has something to tell you."

THE old banker drew a silk handkerchief out and began to polish his nails. When he spoke his tones were deliberate, almost mincing, yet under them sounded a note of forced resignation.

"Late this afternoon," he began, after a quick look at Dick, "I received a telephone call from Mr. Mortan's secretary. It was a—ahem—a brief communication—such as we are accustomed to receive from Mr. Mortan. I was instructed, gentlemen, instructed is the word, to have a million dollars ready for Mr. Mortan's disposal by nine-thirty tomorrow morning. I told the secretary I didn't think I could find such a sum on such short notice. He simply replied: 'Don't think—find!' and hung up. Under the circumstances"—Mr. Castle coughed amiably—"it might be wise to—to find it!" His voice suddenly changed and became grim and hard.

"I need not mince words with you. We are all in an awkward place; tomorrow is going to be bad, very bad! This million dollars that Mr. Mortan wants would of course be nothing to any one of us had we the time to realize on some of our investments—but we have not the time—and it will be a big sum for all of us put together to raise overnight. I have spoken to Mr. Bullard; he agrees with me that though Mr. Mortan's manner may be somewhat dictatorial, it will be better for us in the long run to do as he—ahem—suggests. I therefore pléde myself to find \$250,000. Mr. Bullard will find a like amount—we now look to Ambrose and Company."

Mr. Castle stopped talking and bowed politely to Mr. Ambrose. The latter's face had grown a shade paler. He hesitated a

second and then asked his son-in-law for a cigarette—it was the second time that day he had needed a smoke.

"This is a very grave proposition, Mr. Castle. I do not disguise from you the fact that Ambrose and Company are loaded just now with certain securities which in times like these are not marketable. Furthermore, some of our customers will undoubtedly lay down on us, like that young man you saw tonight. Still I agree with you that it is best to do as Mr. Mortan—suggests—if it can be done. Do you know how he will use the money?"

"I am not in Mr. Mortan's—ahem—confidence to that extent. But he will of course support the market—or he may make the gold circulation easier—great restorer of confidence—gold—and things did look shaky today."

"That's it," roared Bullard. "He'll create confidence by paying out gold—oh! he's got a head on him, Mortan has—damn his eyes! How much is he going to chip in himself, Castle?"

"I have no idea, but doubtless he will supply his full share. He has simply assessed certain little groups of bankers like ourselves what he considers their proportionate share, and will pool the whole amount in a general fund. I don't doubt he'll handle the money to the best advantage."

"Well, we'll have to stand for it." Bullard's tones were regretful. "We'll find the money, and draw against it somehow or other to protect our respective interests—but we can leave the details to Mr. Mortan. Well, Ambrose—how about you?"

"Yes," said the banker hoarsely, "we'll find it somehow; that is, \$250,000—we couldn't raise another cent if we were to be hanged for not having it— If we only had a month—a week even—and we'd make such a killing on this market—think of Lake Superior Waterways going for 78¾— Oh, it makes me sick!"

He rose and walked rapidly back and forth; for once Dick saw his employer without self-control, and it was not an encouraging sight. Finally he resumed his chair, and with elbows on table, chin in hands, seemed lost in reverie.

"That's three quarters of it," said Castle. "Now about the rest? Can anybody suggest anybody? Don't let's split it unless we have to—let's keep it a close corporation."

For an instant no one spoke, then Van

Wikoff offered a name: "There's Peter Poindexter; we all know him."

BULLARD shook his head. "I know for a fact he's absolutely out of the market. He's gone in for real-estate. He told a friend of mine the other day that unless the Socialists got control he need never worry again about anything, and he expected to sleep ten hours a night from now on until he died. Poindexter wont do."

"Hollister," suggested Mr. Ambrose.

"On his yacht somewhere in the China Sea," answered Mr. Castle.

Another silence fell, broken at last by Bullard. "Didn't I see young Amerton as I came in? He's got—" but he got no farther.

"The very man!" Mr. Ambrose cried. "Why he's almost one of my family, and I never thought of him—I mean we're all very intimate with him—my daughters—myself—and I know his father intimately."

"Send for him," growled the "Bull."

"Let me suggest that you explain matters fully to him," urged Van Wikoff. "Tell him the whole truth without mincing matters. I know the man. I have watched him since he engineered that Great Lakes and Coast deal. He is clever and shrewd and knows the value of a dollar. If you can prove to him that by picking up these cheap stocks now, even if it is a case of self-defense, we can make a lot of money on the recovery, he'll come in—so don't quibble."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Ambrose. "Will you talk to him, Castle, or shall I?"

"I will," was the quick answer.

THE host left the room and returned in a few minutes with Philip Amerton. The younger man came lazily, almost indifferently; nodded nonchalantly at the three bankers, lit a great, gold-tipped cigarette in a gold and amber holder, hid a yawn with a highly manicured hand, and dropped into a chair.

"Well?" he drawled.

Mr. Castle explained the situation, telling the bare truth. From his outside position Dick watched the newcomer attentively, and saw that under the stupid exterior there was an active and quick-thinking brain. Amerton's face never moved a muscle as the tale was told; but for his eyes he might have been a disinterested spectator. But once he asked a

question, and the watcher saw the inner man leap to the surface. Amerton couldn't be over thirty, but these big men, these secondary powers in the financial world, evidently respected him. They catered to him, and such catering was not wholly due to the pressure of the situation.

"And that," Castle concluded, "is how we stand!"

Amerton rose wearily. "All right! When do you want it?"

"Nine-thirty."

"Come to my office. G'night!"

Without another word, without even a nod of good night, he left the room.

"The conceited young cub!" cried Bullard furiously. "If it wasn't for—"

"You will remember, Mr. Bullard, that Mr. Amerton is my guest," and Mr. Van Wikoff's face was dangerously calm. The "Bull" subsided.

At eleven-thirty Dick was ready to leave. Mr. Castle and Bullard had already gone, and to his amazement they had departed separately and by a servants' gate on a rear alley. Mr. Van Wikoff saw the look of astonishment.

"Reporters outside all evening," he said in a low voice. "If they happen to speak to you—you have been my guest—that's all."

And Dick understood; truly the world of high finance had its drawbacks. The host urged him to stay and have some supper with the bridge-players, whose party was about over, but Dick declined. He was very tired, and now that the strain of the day was at an end he wanted his bed more than anything in the world. So he told the simple truth, and Mr. Van Wikoff, fully understanding, walked to the door with him. Then the thought that had hung over Dick all evening found expression.

"That friend of yours," he began impulsively, "that Mr. Lanning—" and then realizing his mistake, stopped abruptly. But the older man was kind hearted by nature and knew disinterested kindness in others.

"I shall do what I can," he replied, "but it's a sad case." Then seeing the look of real distress on Dick's face, he laid a hand on his arm. "It's not the easiest business in the world—is it, Mohun?"

IN another moment he was on the street. The air was warm and fresh; a soft breeze stealing across the Park crept down

the narrow street and brought with it a suggestion of the budding spring. Just a suspicion, but it was enough.

He had taken but a few steps when a voice broke upon his thoughts.

"Beg pardon, but could I speak to you for a minute?"

He turned and confronted three men; young men with sharp, intelligent faces. The speaker was a man of average height, the second a big, muscular fellow, the third distinctly small, and in the uncertain light Dick fancied he had seen the smallest of the three at some other time.

"I'm from the *Clarion*," the spokesman continued, "and my friends are on the *Transcript* and the *Bulletin*. You can do us a favor—you have just come from Mr. Van Wikoff's—there was an important meeting there tonight—what can you tell us about it? What did they decide to do, Castle and Bullard and Ambrose? Will they support the market tomorrow? Is it true that Mr. Mortan has issued a call for money?"

The questions followed each other like the barking roll of a machine gun. Dick got his wits together and did not answer. Instead he walked on steadily, the others keeping step with him.

"If you've been watching the house," he said at last, "you must know that Mr. Van Wikoff had some people to dinner with bridge afterwards."

"Oh, we know that—but Castle and Bullard and Ambrose aren't playing bridge tonight. Come! Be a sport and give us a tip."

The reporter's tones were questioning; evidently he was not sure in what capacity Dick had been in the Van Wikoff home. It is possible the secretary might have escaped his tormentors, but at that moment they reached the Park Avenue crossing, and the light of a street lamp fell on Dick. Instantly the little man recognized him.

"It's all right, fellows, I know this gentleman—he's a private secretary to Mr. Ambrose—Mr. Mohun, isn't it?"

Like a good reporter he had the name pat. Dick cursed him under his breath.

"Now this is luck," cried the first speaker, and linked his arm with Dick's. "Come on, old man, and tell us what you know. The public are crazy for news."

Dick wrenched his arm free; the man was familiar and offensive, and if there was one thing Dick hated in the world, it was to be called "old man" by a stranger.

"Nothing to say," he answered, and started across the street. But he little knew the persistence of reporters; the men kept abreast of him.

"Come on!" urged the *Clarion* scribe. "Loosen up—don't be a grouch—what harm is there in giving us the straight tip? We'll give our word we'll only publish what you tell us, not a word more or less. Isn't that so, fellows?"

There was a chorus of assent, but Dick was immovable.

"Nothing doing! So cut it out, you chaps!"

"And nothing doing on that proposition," reported the big man, "we're on the track of a big story and we simply have to get it. Now see here, Mr. Mohun, just one question: Are Castle and the others going to support the market tomorrow?"

Dick stopped at the far side of the avenue; his nerves, tried by the rush of the day and the events of the evening, were at the breaking point, and he was in an ugly humor.

"I told you once before there was nothing doing—so beat it! Fade away—I want to get home!"

"So do we," cried the *Clarion* man, "but we want the story first. Look here, old man,"—and again he tried to take Dick's arm,—"what's the matter with a bottle of beer and a sandwich and a confidential chat at Russell's? Come on, old man!"

Dick shook a finger in his face. "If you call me 'old man' again," he snapped, "I'll hand you one—get me? I said there was nothing doing, and there isn't. That's enough—beat it!"

"Dear, dear! Little Willie's getting mad!" and the tones of the big fellow were exasperating. "Keep your temper, son, or you'll never get on in life!"

Then the original spokesman made the mistake of his young life. "Just a word, Mohun," he said in a most confidential way. "We simply have to get this story—have to, understand—and we're willing to pay for it—get me? Now how about a nice, yellow thing with a big C up in one corner—eh, what?"

THE words had scarcely left his lips when Dick boiled over. "You—skunk!" he cried. Then a straight left shot out with a hundred and sixty pounds of bone and muscle behind it. The unwise reporter staggered, reeled, and toppled gently to the pavement. An oath came

from the exponent of the *Transcript*, and a fist landed on Dick's cheek. He went down, but the blow had not been a heavy one, and the next instant he and the reporter were at it hammer and tongs. At the same time the man of the *Clarion's* staff struggled to his feet and joined in the struggle. Only the small scribe remained aloof. It would have gone hard with Dick, as both his assailants were quick and active, and it was two against one; but help was at hand.

A man's-size fist, followed by a pair of broad shoulders, shot between the combatants. The biggest of the reporters received a punch under the jaw that caused him to reel against a tree-box and reflect on matters in general; the cause of the combat received another fist, and went down for the second time that night. The small man from the *Bulletin*, who had not opened his lips since his recognition of Dick, threw up both hands and cried amiably:

"Women and children first!"

The rescuer lowered a pair of workman-like fists, smiled pleasantly at his victims, and remarked encouragingly:

"Any more trouble, boys, because that's my middle name!"

To which the pacific one promptly replied:

"Absolutely none."

"So!" exclaimed the stranger. "All over? Good! I don't hunt trouble, but if it comes hunting me, I sure eat it. Now then, young fellow,"—he turned to Dick,—"need any more help—want a cop for those tin-horn, would-be strong-arm men?"

Dick wiped his nose, from which the blood was streaming.

"No thanks!" he declared. "Nothing so serious, only a little difference in etiquette between these gentlemen and myself. All over now!"

DICK felt decidedly better. The bleeding from his nose seemed to relieve the day-long strain on his nerves, the blow on his cheek had had a stimulating effect, and he was possessed of an unholy joy in the knowledge that he had got home on his antagonists at least three good punches. Truth to tell, he felt more at peace with the world than at any time since breakfast; such is the virtue of a free fight in a good cause.

The reporter from the *Transcript* sud-

denly burgeoned into a pretty good specimen of manhood.

He felt his jaw in a reflective manner, and then spoke up like a man.

"I'm sorry we mixed it up, Mohun—and Williams got all that was coming to him when you hung that one on him—didn't you, Williams?"

Mr. Williams felt the bridge of his nose.

"And then some," he admitted. "I'm sorry, Mohun, I said what I did; it was rotten—but we've all been on the still hunt since three this afternoon, and I for one had had darned little dinner."

"And I," said Dick, decorating the sidewalk with some perfectly good blood, "I'm sorry I lost my temper and handed you that one—but"—and he drew a long breath—"I've had a pretty strenuous day myself."

"And I," volunteered the cheerful little man, "having witnessed an Homeric combat, and escaped a punch on the jaw and arrest, propose a strategic retreat to Mr. Russell's where we can bathe our wounds and pour a small libation to the Goddess of Peace."

"Which being put in plain United States," said the forceful arbitrator of peace, "means a drink—I *sabe*—and second the motion."

The erstwhile combatants at once retraced their steps and sought Mr. Russell, but as this café was eminently respectable, and adorned a peaceful neighborhood, it was first necessary to seek a drug store and first aid.

ONE was found, and Dick and Mr. Williams were decorated with arnica, while Mr. Reynolds of the *Transcript* pinned his faith to laudanum and lead water. The third man proved to be McGrath of the *Bulletin*, and he and Dick's rescuer stood by and chortled as the drug clerk attended to the marks of battle in a scientific manner. This last individual proved not only a friend in need, but also a gentleman of sporting proclivities. When he had finished his work he stood back and admired it as an artist, as who should say: Ah! technique rather good! When he spoke it was with deep feeling.

"I'm sorry I missed it," he mourned. "I haven't seen a real good scrap since Christmas Eve when 'Spuds' Hennessy ran into 'One Round Carrigan' outside Dempsey's place, and didn't know who it was until noon the next day—oh, it was grand!"

and he sighed. "You," he continued, addressing Dick, "will have a lovely mouse under that eye tomorrow; you'd better have it opened by noon—but it's just as well you guys weren't mixing it up with a bunch of Guineas, you'd all had knives in you then. And it all goes to show," he added philosophically, "that guys like you don't want to monkey with the east-side Irish."

The combatants didn't disillusion this amiable young man; they paid for their treatment and found the café. But their libations were modest and the newspaper men had to report at Park Row, and as the stranger, who introduced himself as Jim Edwards of nowhere in particular and Mexico in special, claimed a downtown hotel as his temporary residence, they left Mr. Russell's before one o'clock. At Fourteenth Street Dick and Edwards left the others and walked slowly westward. Dick had taken a decided fancy to the man; the stranger was bluff and straightforward, but every inch a man, and promised to be an entertaining companion. He asked him to dinner that evening. Mr. Edwards accepted, and they made arrangement to meet at O'Connor's at seven. They shook hands, and Dick, tired, battered and bruised, crept his way to a needed bed.

CHAPTER V

THAT morning was a maelstrom; as bad if not worse than the preceding day. Everybody wanted to sell, and until the support made its presence felt, prices tumbled. By noon however there were signs of a change, prices began to stiffen, a healthier tone crept over the gossip of the board watchers and slowly confidence showed itself. The master hand of the great financial personality was at work, and bit by bit the Street responded.

Dick had no time and less inclination to remember his damaged eye, which was now showing an assortment of colors, but even in the press of business Mr. Van Wikoff noticed it, inquired the reason thereof, and grinned amiably. But work absorbed Mr. Ambrose, and it was not until two o'clock that he even noticed his secretary. Buying orders had begun to come in, and from the customers' room a disposition to pick up cheap stocks at a low level was shown.

The banker gave a sigh of relief after a

phone conversation with Castle and then turned to Dick.

"Well, Mohun," he said pleasantly, "I fancy the worst of it is over. Better get some lunch and hurry back. Now that trouble is over for the day we'll be able to get to business this afternoon. There are a lot of letters I want to—" then he caught a good look at Dick's face.

"My dear boy!" he exclaimed. "What in the world—" And poor Dick had to explain all over again. The banker listened attentively. When Dick concluded he asked but one question, the same question that Van Wikoff had put five hours earlier: "You told them nothing?"

"Not a word!"

The glasses came off the straight nose and rested on a finger. "Good," said Mr. Ambrose warmly. "I was sure I could depend on you." Then he added in a contemplative way:

"It shows what newspaper men will stoop to—anything—to gain their ends. And yet"—the speaker's tones became reflective—"I'm almost sorry I didn't tell you to give those reporters a statement; sometimes a newspaper report from somebody the public trusts does good. It might have strengthened the market—but Mr. Mortan managed it well—didn't he? Great man, Mohun, great man—did you see the statement he gave out last night—most comprehensive—did much to restore confidence; one from you as my secretary might have helped—I should have thought of it. Well, go to lunch and be back as soon as you can—and, Mohun—"

"Yes, sir!"

"Don't hesitate to say that I consider an upward trend has begun—a little encouragement here and there—diplomacy is always useful—you understand?"

Dick sought the Bread and Butter Club, an institution composed of the younger men on the Street, at which Mr. Van Wikoff had proposed him. The club occupied the top floor of a skyscraper in the neighborhood, and every day from one to two it was a miniature stock exchange. Today its patrons had been busy all morning, and like Dick, were just arriving. At a table he caught sight of Grayson; something in the man's face told Dick his friend was in trouble. A cocktail glass stood by his plate, something Dick had never seen before in the many luncheons he had had with Grayson. The assistant cashier looked up and motioned Dick to sit down.

"Things are looking better," observed the younger man.

"Too late for me," Grayson answered; there was a tone in his voice that alarmed Dick.

"What's the trouble?" he asked quietly.

Grayson looked at him, toyed with the shank of the glass, beckoned to the waiter and ordered a Martini. When the man had gone the young cashier looked at his friend.

"Nothing but another sucker—that's all!"

"Have you been hit?"

"Cleaned out! Pshhh!" and Grayson swore under his breath. "I was carrying some Waterways—a good, honest, dividend-paying stock that's got a great future before it—well—you know what happened yesterday—I was called on for a lot of margin this morning—I have till three this P. M. to find it—and I have as much chance as a snowball in hell. I can't ask Mr. Sedley—if he knew I was dabbling in the market, as he calls it, I'd lose my job. So it's good-by Little Savings—what a damn fool I was."

Dick leaned across the table.

"How much is it, Billie, it's just possible I can help you."

Grayson's face brightened—then fell again. "It's a good deal," he answered hoarsely, "too much to ask of you Dick, even if you had it idle—nearly seven thousand—I've been long on seven hundred shares and I have to put another ten percent."

Dick thought a moment. "Who are your brokers?"

Grayson named the firm; a pair of intelligent, young men with a large social patronage and a small capital.

"I went there," Grayson explained, "because I know Brooks at the club and like him. Also they don't do business at our bank, and that was what I wanted."

Mohun looked at his watch. "Get them on the phone," he said simply, "and say you'll be there with a check before three."

"What?" gasped Grayson.

"Yes—better hurry, Billie, it's a quarter of three now."

Grayson wasted no time; he sprang to his feet and hastened to the booth. When he returned there were almost tears in his eyes.

"I sha'n't forget it," he said huskily. "I got Brooks personally; if the check's there by a little after three it will be O. K.

—it needn't be certified—Brooks says they can hang on till tomorrow morning without the actual cash."

Dick rose.

"We'll go at once—never mind, Michael, I'll try and get back later."

"I'd better make this check directly to Brooks & Co.," Dick suggested. "It's on your own bank and you might not care to have it go through with your name on it—if Mr. Sedley objects to this kind of thing."

Grayson nodded. "It would be better," he agreed.

WHEN they reached the street the cashier looked Dick full in the face. "I suppose you know," he said simply, "I can't give you a cent of collateral. Everything I own and have saved went to pay for the Waterways—my note's the only thing I can offer you."

"The stock is good," Dick answered, "it's bound to go back to 85 or so—"

"I'll sell," his friend concluded. "Make no mistake about that, Dick—you'll get your money—I've had my lesson."

They reached the office, and young Mr. Brooks was effusive in his greeting. He liked Grayson and hated to sell him out, but Brooks and Company were a young house and had their own interest to watch. The business was finished in two minutes and once more the friends sought the street. As might be expected between two boyhood companions, little more was said. Dick hated to be thanked, and Grayson, truth to tell, was not at his best when it came to giving thanks. So at the corner where they parted a warm handclasp took the place of words. Grayson tried to say something, but Dick checked him.

"Oh, cut it out!" he growled amiably.

"Yes," returned Grayson. Then a twinkle came in the pleasant eyes.

"Dick! Can I ask one question?"

"Yes."

"Who hit you?"

With a wave of his hand the reprieved man darted away, and Dick retraced his steps to the office. He had missed his lunch, he now owned a debt that might not be paid for months, he lacked ready money for any investment that might be ready for him; but he was content.

The old philosophers had been right; the greatest happiness in a true friendship, lay in what you gave that friend, and not in what that friend gave you.

THE rest of the afternoon was a busy time for Dick and Miss Sloan. Mr. Ambrose having made his losses, dismissed them from his mind and turned all his attention to the future. The future bulked big with possibilities. Despite momentary panics and occasional failures, despite the Supreme Court and the Man at Washington, the business of the country was sound and the majority of the people were optimistic; there was no real reason why financial interests should feel any further anxiety; there was every reason to suppose that the general market would reach its former glories. So reasoned the banker. He had in his heart of hearts a professed contempt for the average investor and speculator, and he capitalized that contempt. Fools were frequent, and know-it-alls were many; so much the better for himself and his associates, so much the worse for the fools. Opportunities would come, big opportunities. There were chances everywhere and he was in a position to take advantage of these chances. But no more voyaging into foreign countries, no more straying after strange gods; he would confine himself to undertakings in his own land, to territories where he knew something of the authorities with whom he had to deal, and where political conditions were stable. No more Mexico. He hated Mexico, and everything connected with it. That red line in his private ledger represented more than a loss of so many thousand dollars. It meant defeat and a personal failure, and Mr. Ambrose hated to fail.

Defeat was a personal insult—he loathed the very name of Mexico—and he cursed the memory of those political officials and powers who had taken his money for the Crawford concessions and played the traitor when the political atmosphere became stormy. Well, Crawford was a discredited bankrupt, and all that platinum and copper, all those promises held out by the colonization scheme that was to follow the development of the mines, were no more. They were only bitter memories represented by a red line in a closed book.

MR. AMBROSE threw back his shoulders and turned to the future. All that afternoon he dictated letters, first to Miss Sloan, then to Dick. Among the latter notes was one to Colonel Powhatan Harrison, President of the Rappahannock & Western R. R. It requested the Colonel

to come to New York at his first opportunity; Mr. Ambrose felt confident that within a short time something might be done towards a recapitalization of the railroad. Another letter was a personal communication to the attorney for the Southern & West Indies R. R., requesting an interview, and a third was to the American Consul at Vera Cruz. The last was very impersonal and asked for a report on "our little matter," but what this "matter" was, Dick had no idea.

It was half-past five before the banker signed the last of the letters and rose from his desk. The day had been an exhausting one, but he did not show it. He had weathered a nasty squall, but the horizon was now clear. This ship of Ambrose and Company was no derelict and another voyage would soon be started.

O'CONNOR'S CAFE stood on Fourteenth Street near Eighth Avenue. It was a four-story structure of unpretentious red brick, one half of the ground floor being taken by the bar, while the rest was occupied by the restaurant. Above were rooms for "single gentlemen," as a sign proclaimed. Dick had found the place during his first week in the city, and liked the food and company so much he often dined there.

So to O'Connor's on this April evening Dick came once more, and in a few minutes Mr. Edwards of nowhere in particular and Mexico in special appeared also.

Edwards was one of those many men the far western states know so well. A wanderer from his school days, he had been everywhere, seen everything, and through heat and cold, feast or famine, had survived and flourished, but had nothing to show for it. He smacked of the big country and open places, and his talk interested Dick. The only man he had ever known who at all resembled the wanderer had been a Wyoming cattleman he had once met in Chicago, and to whom he had taken a great fancy. Edwards was like Simon Walker in this: both men had weather-beaten skins, clear eyes, and an honest love for the open air, but whereas the Wyoming stockman had been in a legitimate business in a Rocky Mountain valley for thirty years, Edwards had prospected, mined and tramped for the same period and was in no apparent hurry to change his mode of life.

At present he was interested in a min-

ing proposition in Mexico, and had been trying to enlist New York capital without success.

The southern republic was held in political distrust by Wall Street just at present, he declared, and the big fans would have none of it.

"But it's there, son, stacks of it!"

"Gold, Mr. Edwards?" Dick inquired.

"And platinum; enough to make everybody rich for life, but it'll cost a lot to get it out, and these fellows who have ready money show me the door today when I even mention Mexico."

"I'M afraid New York has been rather badly stung on some recent Mexican enterprise," Dick volunteered. "Only yesterday a firm went under, Crawford and Company, and I heard indirectly they had lost heavily in some scheme down there."

"So they did," Edwards returned promptly. "They were playin' a sort of combination bet, copper mine, oil well, and a colonization scheme all combined. They controlled some good concessions, but the political grafters came down on them for more money and the thing went ker-floioe. Crawford and Company couldn't come across."

"That was it, was it? I hadn't heard the particulars."

"Yes, I happen to know something about the deal—they had a real good thing and they'd already chipped up a lot of money—but it's gone now. One of your big bankers stung, fellow named Ambrose."

Dick showed his surprise.

"Ever hear of him?" asked Edwards.

"He happens to be my boss."

"The devil he does! Then you know something about it."

Dick promptly denied any knowledge of Mr. Ambrose's private affairs.

"So!" said the other. "Well, he was in it with Crawford's crowd—Moon got 'em in."

"Who's Moon?"

"The livest Englishman you ever saw; knows Mexican resources as well as Universal Oil or the Ward Syndicate do. He used to be with the Ward people, but a couple of years ago he dug up this combination scheme and has been doin' business on his own hook."

"I'm sorry Mr. Ambrose washed," Dick said, "he's been very square with me."

"Guess he's not facin' ruin, somebody told me he'd been wise enough to buy

outright a little chunk of land right in the middle of where this concession was to operate. That gives him some chance to get back, if a revolution don't start, and things get working again."

"But it's funny you never heard of Moon; I'm sure your boss knows him personally."

"Oh! Mr. Ambrose does business with lots of people I've never even heard of—I've only been with him a few months."

"So! Well, you've missed a live wire in Moon, even if he did lose out in this Sonora deal, and he'll come back all right. I guess Ambrose will help him if Mexico gets quiet again; I think he's made money for Ambrose at other times—and—why, son, here's a funny thing, Moon don't spell his name the way it's pronounced: it's M-o-h-u-n, I've seen his signature; is that the way you spell your name?"

"Yes," and Dick's face showed his interest. "That is funny, I never knew anyone else of the name—so your friend pronounces it in the English way—I see—oh, that's why Mr. Ambrose took such an interest when I first met him—of course the name was familiar to him. I'd like to meet your Englishman."

"Maybe you will some day, he often hits New York."

Mr. Edwards pulled a huge silver watch from his pocket and announced the evening was still young.

"Let's go to a moving-picture," he pleaded, "I'm strong for 'em; and there's one I would like to see again before I leave town. It's called 'The Teeth of Destiny,' and there's a good-looking dame who gets tied to the arms of a windmill, and a guy in an airship cuts her loose— It's great!"

So they went out into the soft spring night and the pleasure-seeking crowds of the avenues.

CHAPTER VI

SPRING found Mr. Ambrose somewhat pressed for money. The firm was prosperous, but as an individual he had had losses which he was eager to recoup. Among the possibilities ahead the refinancing of the Rappahannock and Western promised most. This little jerk-pot road, built across Northern Virginia in ante-bellum days, and ruined by the war, had in the 'seventies been helped to its feet by the Harrisons and some other

well-known Virginia families. It had never paid a dividend, never had a train arrive on time, and might have remained an ancestral curiosity but for the opening of the Grover oil-fields in West Virginia. A ramshackle spur tapped this country, and to the childlike delight of the Rappahannock directors, the freight receipts began to soar.

At this auspicious moment the huge Southern and West Indies system who had previously ignored the little road, stepped in with an offer to buy; the oil field receipts were tempting. But the King George and Fauquier County families, who owned most of the Rappahannock stock, indignantly refused; the road was a family pet. The Southern was peeved; the line could not be paralleled owing to its charter rights, and the only resource was to capture.

And here an opportunity occurred when the Virginia stockholders authorized Colonel Harrison to sound the northern financiers on the subject of recapitalizing the long-forgotten line. The Colonel promptly approached Mr. Ambrose, an old family intimacy existing between them, and a few days later it became known on the Street that the affairs of the R. and W. were in the hands of Ambrose and Company. The Southern saw its chance; Mr. Luce, the general solicitor, visited the banker. Mr. Ambrose returned the compliment and in a short time the gentlemen understood each other. Mr. Luce was a genial pirate, the banker needed money, and the transaction was a simple one.

MR. AMBROSE would underwrite the loan, certain of the Virginia stockholders who happened to want cash for their old scrip would be paid off, and though in the new allotment the King George and Fauquier County stockholders would obtain share for share, the additional shares representing the difference between the old and new capital would find their way into strange hands, and there would be a singular unanimity in voting at the next annual election. It was beautiful finance of the cleanest kind. Mr. Ambrose would make a handsome profit, a Trust Company would attend to the detail work of share allotment, the Southern would own the Rappahannock, and the old stockholders with 49 per cent could sit still and watch the trains go by.

And all might have gone well had it not

been for an unassuming clerk who sat in Mr. Ambrose's outer office.

On this particular Saturday afternoon, when all true New York fans were rejoicing in the fact that the Giants led the pennant race, this clerk sat with his employer's daughter on a bench at Washington Heights.

Martha had suddenly determined she would like to own a road-horse of which she had heard, and the stables being in the near neighborhood, the young people, after inspection of the animal, had mechanically turned towards the Heights. She had enlisted Dick's company, because she liked him or because she was a woman, and the young man had eagerly accepted because Martha was Martha. During the past month they had met several times at little gatherings, she had been uniformly kind in introducing him to her friends and between them there had sprung up a mutual interest which bade fair to ripen into friendship. She saw he was in deadly earnest to succeed, and her woman's intuition told her that earnestness would never trample on the rights of others. She admired both qualities; some of her friends possessed one and lacked the other, some of them missed both.

MARTHA could be earnest herself when occasion demanded, and though her life had been passed in pleasant places and conventional surroundings, had tended towards light-heartedness rather than seriousness, she was true as steel and sound as a rock at heart. As for Dick, he could not and would not try to define his feelings towards Martha. He only knew that he liked to be with her, not when he could, but as much as he could—which in itself should have been warning enough.

"Wouldn't you like to smoke?" she volunteered. "I know most men do in the open air."

Dick was eager for tobacco and filled his pipe.

"That's a nice pipe," she said critically. "Arthur Van Wikoff, who smokes all the time, told me a drop briar was better than all the fancy meerschaums in the world."

"So it is; you don't get tired of a briar; you can carry it anywhere, while those fancy pipes with gold bands and amber stems are only good for the house."

He drew a long breath and a cloud of smoke drifted towards the river. For the moment contentment and quietude reigned.

"Anything happen at the office today?" she asked.

"Nothing startling; Saturday's a dull sort of day, you know. Oh! your friend Colonel Harrison is in town. He dropped in and while waiting for your father talked to me. He's a fine old man, isn't he? He asked me to visit him this fall and shoot quail. I wish I could," and Dick's tone was wistful—sometimes he longed for the open. Martha was quick to notice the change of voice.

"I hope you can go," she said. "You'd have a splendid time—he is the dearest old man—and Mrs. Harrison is a duck." Then she added, "Homesick, Mr. Mohun?"

Dick was indignant.

"Homesick! Goodness, no! But I would like to see some real country again—it's been a long time since I smelt the rain on the trees, or saw the sun set behind woods—I'm a little stale, I guess—that's all."

"It's only natural you should want to see your home again."

Dick puffed vigorously and another blue cloud started towards Fort Lee.

"You don't know Farmington," he said with a laugh. "I was glad to get away from it, and I'm happy to stay away. You see I'm absolutely alone in the world, Miss Ambrose, I haven't a relation I know nearer than a second cousin, and there's nothing to call me to Farmington. Oh! the monotony of it! the country flat, save for some little hills to the west, and prairie and farm land here, there and everywhere. And corn, corn, corn; as a boy I heard nothing but corn, when it wasn't wheat or orchard, or cattle or pigs. It was fatten this, fatten that! 'Will you butcher the hog today?' 'Are the silos filled?' Lord! when I think of those days I wonder I didn't run away from Farmington when I was a kid. If it hadn't been for father and mother, I know I would have escaped—but—I cared for them," he ended simply.

"I'm sure you did," she said quietly.

"Homesick," he resumed. "Perish the thought! New York is good enough for me."

"You like your work, don't you?" she asked, glancing at him from under the long, brown lashes. "I heard father say the other day you had a cool head and good judgment—and when father says that he means it, Mr. Mohun."

"Very nice of him to say so, I'm sure,"

and a perfect volcano of smoke covered Dick's pleased embarrassment. "Yes, of course, I like the work or I wouldn't stay a minute, a discontented employé is very little use to himself or his employer."

She nodded understandingly—then—

"But sometimes, dealing only in money must get rather monotonous. It's not as if you were out somewhere in the open world handling something you can see and touch. You're in a stuffy office all day, you and father and Arthur and all the rest of you, making money out of things you never see and which you wouldn't recognize if you did see them. Isn't that so—honestly? It's just stocks, and bonds, and allotments—whatever they are—nothing but pieces of paper that are worth something because other men have built something or done something to make them worth something at a bank. And the nervous, excited, unhappy people you see every day—ugh!"—and Martha made a wry face. "Oh! I wouldn't be a banker or broker for anything. Do you know what I would do if I were a man, Mr. Mohun?"

"Play golf," suggested Dick.

MARTHA dismissed the suggestion with a wave of her glove. "I'd be an engineer, a civil engineer like the man in Richard Harding Davis' story. I'd go places, I'd build things. I'd see all kinds of new places and strange people, I'd get new ideas and learn to speak Spanish and Portuguese and Italian, and maybe Japanese—Oh, I'd do lots of things rather than stay cooped up in a New York office."

"But we all can't be civil engineers," protested Dick, "and go to South America like the fellow in that book, and shoot conspirators, and rescue beautiful daughters of millionaires. Some of us must stay home and do the work that has to be done here. Why—half the work these civil engineers of yours do couldn't be done without Wall Street. Who builds the railroads—Wall Street. Who makes possible all those huge mills we see near Pittsburgh—Wall Street. I know a man who started the other day for Mexico to hunt gold and platinum. If he finds it, who'll dig it out for him—Wall Street. Gee! when you come to sift everything down to ashes, Miss Ambrose, if it wasn't for Wall Street half of the industries of this country wouldn't be alive today."

Dick stopped out of breath. In his eloquence his pipe had gone out also.

"But," and Martha was very much interested, "don't you think, even if there were no such place as Wall Street, that the money to start these industries would still be found? I don't know how exactly, I was a dunce at school over political economy, but still—I'm sure the money would be found. And look at the dreadful results we see from speculation—gambling! I don't think I'm strait-laced—I play penny bridge sometimes"—and Martha blushed at her wrong-doing—"but look at what we see after a long, bad market—or a panic. There was Mr. Harvey Lanning—you probably know him—he would have been absolutely ruined had not Arthur—bless his heart—helped him a month ago."

"Oh!" cried Dick. "Mr. Van Wikoff did help him then—bully for him—I didn't—" Then he remembered himself and stopped abruptly.

"You know Mr. Lanning, then?"

"I've seen him, that's all."

"And he was only married in January," the girl said softly. "Think what it would have meant to his wife, if Arthur hadn't helped."

Dick nodded; there was obviously nothing to say. The fact that Mr. Lanning had no business on Wall Street would not have influenced Martha. She suddenly changed the subject.

"THERE must be plenty of nice men who are not brokers, heaps and heaps of them, who do all kinds of things, the kind of men you would like to know, but you don't often meet in the big cities. I wonder"—and Martha's thoughts jumped again—"if you'd meet some nice men at Colonel Harrison's—but Fredericksburg is a small town and I fancy most of the men leave when they grow up. And I wonder what the Colonel is doing in New York now—he was here only a month ago."

"You can search me," Dick answered, "business probably."

"Oh! then it's the railroad," cried Martha delightedly, "the R. & W., the Colonel's baby, the pet of the F. F. V.'s, the funniest, cutest little Noah's Ark railroad that there is in the world. You ought to see it, Mr. Mohun. I was on it some years ago; it starts at Fredericksburg and just runs on till it gets tired and stops. Four times a day: the two through-trains Number 1 and Number 2, and the two locals, the 'short dogs.' On the 'short dog' the conductor stops the train and gathers

flowers and fruit to take home to his wife, or to give to the women passengers, and it stops anywhere to take on a countryman. It's the most delightful road, it's the child of the Colonel's old age, the apple of his eye. He would sit up all night and rock it to sleep if it would do any good. I do hope nothing has happened to it—I don't know what Colonel Harrison would do if anything went wrong and he lost the road—or what the rest of those Virginia families who own it would do—it's sad to think."

"I guess nothing's wrong," he encouraged. "If there is, your father will straighten things out—I know the Colonel has the greatest confidence in Mr. Ambrose."

"Oh, father can if he wants to—but—but sometimes I think the Colonel bores him—and—there—I shouldn't have said that, Mr. Mohun."

"No harm done, I've forgotten it already—you know I'm a secretary, Miss Ambrose, and it's part of my duty to forget things and to remember—sometimes—" he added.

"Well, I know you, you're a very nice young man," declared Martha, "and I'm sure we're going to be great friends."

"Hooray!" cried the delighted young man. "Several hoorays and loud cheers! and I'm for you—strictly for you."

"Good," said Martha. "And we'll flirt outrageously."

"Appallingly," echoed Dick. "Only you'll have to teach me, I don't know how."

"Neither do I," she objected. "I think a girl who will flirt is a puss. Only Philip Amerton says I do—you know him, don't you? Oh! I forgot—I introduced you—and Philip doesn't count of course."

"Oh, doesn't he?" said Dick. "I thought he did; isn't he a great friend of yours?"

"Yes indeed, I've known him since I was a baby, perhaps that's the reason. You see—" she laughed a little. "I think father expects me to marry Philip—and maybe—maybe he expects so too—and it's hard to take anybody very seriously if other people expect you to marry that person—isn't it, Mr. Mohun?"

Dick coughed, and knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Very difficult—oh most difficult!"

"Don't you think he's nice?" and again Martha shot a glance at her father's secretary. Dick grunted something that was

unintelligible. Then he looked her full in the eyes.

"Not half nice enough for you," he declared boldly.

Miss Ambrose blushed,—it's easy enough at twenty-one,—besides the voice rang startlingly true.

"That's a very nice speech," she admitted. "You're beginning splendidly, you need no lessons. And now"—she glanced at her wrist—"it's after six. I must be starting home."

They rose and followed the winding path. Already other disconsolate couples were emerging from nooks and corners and wandering sadly toward the streets. Motors began to hum in the near distance; from the road-house on the thoroughfare came the tuning up of the orchestra, and from the Hudson far below, the clear notes of a bugle—the world was getting ready to dine.

ON the following Monday morning about the time Dick began to think of lunch, Mr. Ambrose emerged from the private office. He beckoned to Dick, who picked up a note-book and obeyed the summons.

The banker closed the door and the two men confronted each other. The morning sun fell through the glass roof, streamed through the window on the area and illuminated every nook of the small room. Later Dick remembered a cobweb in one corner of the ceiling overlooked by a careless cleaner.

Mr. Ambrose was immaculately groomed as usual, this morning in a blue serge suit with a cornflower in his buttonhole. He looked what he was, a successful man of affairs, a cultured man of the world, careful of his personal appearance and rather proud of it. When he spoke there was a ring in his voice the younger man did not like.

"Mohun," he said, "I am forced to ask you a question, one I dislike to ask, but your action apparently leaves me no alternative."

Dick looked at him in honest amazement; what in the world was coming? The banker took a scrap of paper from the desk, looked at it as if to refresh his memory, and continued:

"When you first entered my employ I thought it was distinctly understood between us,—certainly I made it plain on my part,—that if you wished to go on the

market, your transactions were to go through this office; and that you fully understood this fact."

Dick bowed. "I understood that fully," he replied.

"Then I will ask to have you explain this"—he motioned with the scrap of paper. "I am, as you know, a director of the Drug & Chemical Bank; I am also on the sub-committee that audits the sheets of the tellers. In that capacity information always reaches the committee as to any checks which seem worthy of notice that pass through in the ordinary course of business."

A light burst upon Dick, and it must be acknowledged that a sense of relief came also.

"It is our custom," Mr. Ambrose continued gravely, "to keep an eye on our customers' check transactions, and especially when depositors happen to be in the employ or directly connected in a business way, with any of our board—don't misunderstand me—we are not spies or busybodies, but common sense will tell you that in business we must be assured of the rectitude of those with whom we deal, and especially those who are in our confidence, as you are, to a large extent, in mine."

He paused, waiting a response. He got it instantly.

"CERTAINLY, Mr. Ambrose, I see that. One of your clerks living beyond his means, drawing checks to a gambling-house, a bucket-shop, or a race-track man—would not be—well—quite the proper thing."

The banker assented with a quick wave of his hand. "I am glad you comprehend our position—so I must ask you to explain this." And he held up the memorandum.

"On the 14th of last month, the day after we had that little flurry—the day after that meeting at Mr. Van Wikoff's house, a meeting at which you in your position as a trusted clerk became possessed of certain very valuable information—you drew a check to the order of Brooks and Company in the sum of \$7,000, a large sum, and Brooks and Company are stockbrokers—well?"

The final word fairly snapped as the banker ended, but Dick of course was wholly at ease.

"Perfectly true," he said. "I drew that check. But because it is to the order of a firm of brokers, it doesn't necessarily

imply that I was gambling—nor that I had used private knowledge—nor even that that money was used by me. And furthermore, Mr. Ambrose,"—Dick's tones had become sharp and incisive,—"you have no right to doubt my given promise. I told you most emphatically six months ago that if I wanted to speculate, or even buy for investment, I'd do so through your firm—you made it a *sine qua non* when I asked you—what right have you, sir, now to question my promise?"

LIKE many another man whose conscience is not absolutely clear, the banker was prone to question the honesty of others and the sincerity of their motives, but he was not so warped in his perceptions that he could not recognize honesty when he saw it. And he saw it now. A bit of color rested in his cheeks—nor did he quite like Dick's independence. He held up a hand.

"One moment, Mr. Mohun! Moderate your tone if you please, don't fly off the handle! I am not questioning your word. Heaven forbid I should doubt the word of anyone in my employ—I am asking for an explanation—that is all—and I think I am entitled to it. Doubtless the explanation is a simple one, and you have no occasion to be angry—well?"

Dick thought a second; he had that enviable faculty of being able to see both sides of a question at issue, even when he himself was aroused or prejudiced. Mr. Ambrose was entitled to an explanation.

"Very good, sir," he said, "I grant that right. The check is mine, the money was mine—but I used it to help a friend—it is only a loan."

"To Brooks and Company?" demanded Mr. Ambrose instantly. Then he saw his mistake. "I beg your pardon," he said, "that question was not my right—I withdraw it."

But Dick was too fair to let any doubt reflect on the young brokers. "No, not to Brooks and Company; they were simply the middlemen in the matter—it is a loan to a personal friend."

The banker's face became less tense. "Very well, Mohun, you know your own business best, of course, but \$7,000 is a large sum; however,"—he shrugged his shoulders,—"I hope you are satisfied with your security." Then he added in a more pleasant tone, "I hope you understand, Mohun, I wasn't questioning your honor—

simply an explanation as a matter of business principle."

"All right—no harm done," and Dick's tones were unaggrieved.

"Very well! Let's see—it's nearly one—you had better get your lunch. Be back by two. Colonel Harrison will be here then, if he remembers to be on time, and I may want you to take some memos."

Shortly after two, Colonel Harrison appeared. With him was a black-haired, black-eyed young man some few years older than Dick.

"My nephew, Mr. Ashley Harrison, sir," and the Colonel made a very courtly introduction. The young man shook hands and Dick liked the appearance of the Colonel's nephew. His manners were cordial, his voice manly and pleasant, and he handled his movements well in the small confines of the office.

"My nephew, Mr. Mohun, is in the office of Brewster and Company, and I thought he would be interested in this little matter of the R. & W. that Mr. Ambrose is adjusting for us."

"My interest," said young Harrison, with a smile, "is represented by a certificate of ten shares, not a very massive interest, I'm afraid, but still an heirloom."

"From your grandfather, sir, don't forget that, one of the original board of the R. & W."

"True," assented Ashley. "I wish the dear old gentleman had left me a hundred such if dividends continue to be paid."

"They will, Ashley," thundered the Colonel, "they will. We are on the eve, sir, of a most unprecedented era of railroad prosperity throughout the entire south. And Virginia, that 'Garden Spot of the World,' is going to profit enormously—don't you think so, sir?" He turned to Mohun.

"I hope so, Colonel, hope so sincerely."

"I'm sure of it, Mr. Mohun. Oil is a necessary adjunct of our civilization, oil is a staple commodity our glorious civilization has to have, and the Grover Oil Fields are inexhaustible. And it has to be shipped over our railroad to reach the eastern and northern markets. The R. & W. is not a large road, sir, but it has been honestly capitalized and honestly managed, and now virtue is its own reward. This new money is necessary, sir, on account of increased business, and our old and faithful stockholders will receive the reward of their years of faithfulness."

"Glad to hear so, Colonel, glad to hear it. Wish I had a lot of shares in it."

Mr. Ambrose came to the door and greeted the men—then he ushered them in and told Dick to follow.

THE conference was not a long one. Mr. Ambrose was willing to underwrite the new issue of common stock on behalf of the R. & W., the old issue being retired dollar for dollar. He was willing to take the new at 88 and would make his own profit; the Colonel was to call a meeting of his stockholders and the usual resolution authorizing the increased capitalization was to follow. When everything had been properly arranged some trust company would act as the Trustee; the old stockholders would turn in their certificates and receive share for share in the new, or be paid in cash for their old holdings the actual amounts they had subscribed a generation or so ago. That was all there was to it; the money obtained by the new subscription would enable the road to supply the new equipment and build a permanent spur into the oil country; in a year or two the R. & W. would be a thriving little railway and all would be well.

Mr. Ambrose smiled cheerfully at his visitors and laid his pencil upon the desk. The Colonel beamed with satisfaction, and Ashley Harrison nodded his comprehension; remained only the sanction of the present stockholders, which the President of the R. & W. declared could be obtained in three weeks.

"There is only one objection to the plan," said the younger Harrison, "the question of allotment of this new stock. You understand, Mr. Ambrose, that the road is a close corporation and the older interests have no intention of letting the control pass from them. We have no objections to a certain amount of the stock being outside, say 40 per cent, but the control must be vested among us. I speak rather presumingly," he said smilingly, "as I own only ten shares—but I know I speak for the Virginia stockholders."

"To be sure, to be sure," the Colonel admitted, "I did not call Mr. Ambrose's attention to that fact as I know he appreciates our position—but control must be kept among us, sir, who have borne the heat and labor of the day. The road is not for the Southern System, sir, who have already made an impertinent offer to buy it."

Mr. Ambrose was very patient.

"It's only a question of subscription," he explained. "The books will be open at a certain date and it's first come, first served. Perhaps we can so arrange the matter that old holders will be given preference, possibly that will be the best way—yes, yes, that's the best way."

With warm farewells on the part of the Colonel the interview ended.

CHAPTER VII

EVENTS in the life history of the Rappahannock and Western now moved in regular channels. The stock-holders met and adopted the necessary resolution, a financial institution was selected to take care of the detail work and the allotment of the new stock issue, and the whole transaction seemed cut and dried.

Mr. Luce and Mr. Ambrose had prepared for all contingencies—all save one. They had traced the old stock and found the few old holders who preferred cash to a glowing future, the agile Mr. Luce had prepared his list of additional purchasers whose future voting would show that singular unanimity before mentioned, the financial institution understood their duty, in fact all contingencies had been foreseen save—the young man in the outer office.

We all of us have moments when we become vaguely conscious something is wrong in our daily lives; in our homes, or in the grind of business. At first we are indifferent, gloss it over and lay the blame to our imagination. Then this feeling, this sensation becomes more and more acute. Gamblers call it a "hunch," and when a "hunch" is working its victim has to obey, there is no alternative. Little things we would not ordinarily notice become magnified, forgotten occurrences are remembered, little scraps of conversation, passages in letters are recalled, and the person concerned is "hunch-ridden." He becomes absolutely miserable until he plays his "hunch," or goes thoroughly into the matter with a complete investigation. In the present era it is a case for the "efficiency expert"—in the days when Richard Mohun lived in New York the only expert was the individual concerned.

And Dick was doing some hard thinking. Somehow the R. & W. matter possessed

more than appeared on the surface. Exactly what it was he could not determine. Superficially it seemed a very simple piece of railroad financing, but was it as simple as it seemed? Bit by bit little episodes, half-forgotten letters, telephone messages, conversations half understood or partially overheard between Mr. Ambrose, Mr. Luce and others, swelled in importance in his own mind and took on new meaning. The R. & W. had been in the office for months and Colonel Harrison was a familiar figure. The April panic had forced other business by the board, but now this little Virginia road was back again and affairs were rapidly approaching a climax. Mr. Ambrose appeared the same as usual to the average acquaintance, but Dick, who saw him under most intimate business relations, knew the man was under a strain. The chief was nervous, fidgety at times when he fancied himself unobserved, and pernickety, queer traits for him.

FOR a time he had been indifferent to the affairs of the R. & W. and frankly bored with its president. Then a change had come, and it was coincident with an interview with Mr. Luce. Dick remembered the day—a phone message had come, Mr. Ambrose had left the office, returned, and that afternoon had written Colonel Harrison to come to New York.

Who was Mr. Luce? All Dick knew about him was that he was the General Solicitor for the Southern and West Indies System, and a director of the Transportation Trust Company—and the Transportation Trust had been selected as the registrars of the R. & W. subscription.

Dick paused in the act of untying his four-in-hand—he was in his room at Thirteenth Street getting ready for the night—and slowly filled an old pipe; somehow tobacco helped to clear his mind. The Southern—could that be it? Did that great system with its thousands of miles of track and leases want a little, ten-cent backwoods road? Yet Colonel Harrison had said they had offered to buy the Rappahannock.

If so, was this new issue of stock an opportunity to get control? Of course it was. But would Mr. Ambrose allow—oh! the idea was nonsense! Colonel Harrison was not only a client, he was a valued friend; could it be possible the New York banker would deliberately stoop—no! Yet in the background hovered the shadowy

form of Mr. Luce; he was always there, letter, message, telephone call—calling—calling—

THE alarm clock was ringing and the young man lazily opened his eyes. The sunshine of the early summer filled his room as he silenced Big Ben, and the warmth of the morning was in the house as he slipped downstairs for his bath. By good luck he had beaten a young student to the cold water, a gentleman who rose about the same time, and as the shower cleared the cobwebs of the night from Dick's brain, the thought of Mr. Luce and Mr. Ambrose, Colonel Harrison and his beloved road, came over him again. He had fallen asleep thinking—he rose thinking; the R. & W. obsessed his mind as he took a seat at the breakfast table.

When he reached the office he heard a piece of news; Mr. Ambrose had slipped in getting out of his motor the previous afternoon, and was confined to the house for a few days with a wrenched ankle. Mr. Mohun was to go to the house after lunch—so Miss Sloan.

A number of customers called during the morning, among them Colonel Harrison; a phone message came from Mr. Luce's office, and callers in person, and those who phoned were referred to Mr. Ambrose's library. Mr. Van Wikoff explained that business matters would take his father-in-law's mind off the torn ligaments and Mr. Mohun would be glad to take any and all messages after two o'clock.

Half-past two found Dick with his employer. Mr. Ambrose occupied an easy chair, the damaged ankle resting upon a cushioned what-not. The banker was in some pain and showed it. A bottle of mineral water and some cracked ice stood on the table and a manservant hovered in the vicinity.

THE phone being in a closet downstairs, the head of the house was unable to send or take personal messages, and the servant's morning had not been an enviable one. The injured man was in the worst of humors and intolerant of mistakes; Dick sensed an unpleasant couple of hours. The servant was dismissed with instructions to listen for the bell, should he be summoned.

"Wretched luck," growled Mr. Ambrose, "with all this business on; need you badly this afternoon, Mohun. Smoke if you wish—where the devil are those cigars?"

The cigars were found and Dick took dictation for a full hour. Frequently he was interrupted by the entrance of the servant with phone messages, and once Martha came in to bid her father good-by for a little while. She had some engagement that could not be broken. At each interruption Mr. Ambrose had become more and more irritated, and he finally told the man to bring no more messages.

Some of the letters were short and formal, others were long, intimate and filled with technical matters that kept the stenographic wits on the jump. Mr. Ambrose was not a man to forgive an error in figures. At last the banker seemed to be finished with his correspondence. He sipped some water and rested uneasily in the chair. Then he turned to his clerk.

"You say Colonel Harrison was in this afternoon; any message?"

"Only that things were coming along famously; that was his expression, and he expected to be ready next week. Also that he would like to see you as soon as possible."

"Mr. Luce phone?"

"Yes sir, about noon. I said you were laid up here, that I would take any message, or he could phone you at this house."

"What did he say to that?"

"His secretary, or whoever it was on the phone, replied that Mr. Luce would either phone you here or come and see you this afternoon if he could get away, and he might be called out of town."

THE banker made an impatient gesture. "I want to see him. Go downstairs and get him on the phone—personally—you understand—and say I want him to come here tomorrow morning. If he can't come, tell him I want that list in the R. & W. affair—list—understand—he'll know what I mean. Tell him matters are coming to a head—that Colonel Harrison is in the city again—and that I need that list tomorrow without fail. This is important, Mohun, don't make any mistakes."

Dick found Mr. Luce's secretary, but the lawyer had been suddenly called to Albany and would not be back for a couple of days.

On the receipt of this news Mr. Ambrose damned Mr. Luce, Albany and his own injured ankle, impartially. Then he relapsed into momentary silence and thrummed impatiently on the table with his fingers. He thought for a minute and suddenly seemed to make up his mind.

"Look here, Mohun," he said, "I'm going to send you up to Albany by the night train, this is too important a matter for delay. Find out from Mr. Luce's office where he can be found in the capitol and hunt him up as soon as you get there. When you find him say this—no—no memos—carry this in your head: I want a list of those names in the R. & W. allotment with their respective amounts—get that?"

"Yes."

"Colonel Harrison is about ready and I think it is time that Mr. Luce attends to his own end of the matter at the Transportation Trust Company—do you get that? Repeat it."

SLOWLY, slowly a light was beginning to dawn on Dick; he repeated the instructions almost word for word, but as he voiced them he felt a growing indignation stealing over him—in the language of the street, Mr. Ambrose was going to "double-cross" the old Colonel. Dick felt sure of it.

The banker nodded as Mohun ended. He took another sip of water and selected a cigar. As he inspected it critically, Dick inspected him. That patch of color in each cheek indicated decision on Mr. Ambrose's part; Dick knew the signs, he had not studied his employer for months without reward.

"There is a good train about eleven if I remember rightly," the older man resumed. "Look it up and get your reservation—and—Mohun—"

"Yes."

"This might be an opportunity for—ahem—a little investment on your part." He paused and glanced at his secretary. Dick was perfectly calm and collected, but he too had an extra touch of color in his face. He returned his chief's gaze with one of polite enquiry. Mr. Ambrose gave a little cough.

"I was perhaps a little too peremptory with you the other day in the matter of that loan to your friend," he went on, "and I now wish to show some little appreciation of your services to me by giving you a chance to make some money. By the way, has your friend paid his loan?"

"Yes," said Dick, for Superior Waterways had climbed back to Billie Grayson's figure, when he had promptly sold and paid Dick. Mr. Ambrose expressed his gratification.

"Ah! delighted to hear it—well—it is this stock issue of the R. & W. I have in mind. I have reason to think that there will be a decided rise in price after the allotments are made, nothing startling, railroads don't move like industrials, but substantial—yes, yes, a substantial rise. There might be an opportunity there, Mohun!"

"Is the Southern going to take it over?" Dick asked calmly, though he felt his pulses throbbing more vigorously than usual. The banker made a sudden movement and looked keenly across the table, but the only look on the young man's face was one of interest.

"Possibly! They're the natural owners."

"But I understood," Dick said quietly, "from conversations I have heard in the office—I couldn't help hearing them,"—Mr. Ambrose bowed,— "that the control was still to remain in the hands of the Virginia stockholders."

"Pshaw! Time and tide wait for no man. Those old fossils down there are so slow to move they won't have their minds made up by the time the subscription list is closed—and a dividend-earning stock will be oversubscribed by the time they determine what to do with their certificates. Huh!" and the speaker gave an ugly little laugh, almost a triumphant laugh.

"Virginia needs to wake up—and I fancy the Southern System will be of more benefit to the state than Colonel Harrison, and his wonderful R. & W.—what's the matter, Mohun?" For Dick had risen and was confronting his employer. The boy's face had changed from red to white, he was seething with pent-up indignation and when he spoke his words came clear as a bell and trenchant in their meaning.

"Only this, sir. I have no desire to make any money out of Colonel Harrison and his friends; I decline to take this opportunity you have so kindly, so very kindly, given me; I decline to go to Albany to give your message to Mr. Luce—my resignation will be in your hands tomorrow."

"No, by God! It won't," thundered Mr. Ambrose. "I'll have no resignation from you—you insolent"—the banker was at a loss for a word—"young whipper-snapper! Resignation! I'll pitch you out on the streets like the hypocritical young cub you are—" He reached for the bell, but Dick's hand covered it. Mr. Ambrose's lips were trembling, his face was suffused.

"You whipper-snapper!" he cried again. "Oh, if I could only stand on my feet I'd slap your face for you!"

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!" returned Dick. "You can knife a friend, an old gentleman, behind his back, and ruin him financially perhaps, but you wouldn't dare strike a man. You can do a dirty, filthy piece of Wall Street treachery, but you haven't really got the guts to hit a louse, Ambrose! Pitch me on the streets? Oh no!" He turned and walked to the door. As he opened it a choking voice from the table called to him.

Mr. Ambrose was erect in his chair, one hand pointing at him. "If you so much as breathe one word outside of what you have intimated here, by God! Mohun, I'll send you to jail."

Dick looked at him with contempt.

"Jail! You send me to jail? Do you know the road so well, Mr. Ambrose?"

He flung wide the door. "As for talking about what you and Mr. Luce propose doing to Colonel Harrison and his road—I shall warn the Colonel instantly. As to other—" he stopped abruptly. From below there floated up the clear, warm voice of a young girl singing:

"Oh,—you'll tak the low road and I'll tak
the high road
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye!"

HE closed the door again and looked toward his late employer. "As for others—I shall use my own discretion."

Then once more he opened the door, and closing it behind him went down the stairs. Martha met him on the lower landing.

"Going just as I come home—how rude, Mr. Mohun."

He looked her full in the face; she was very pretty that afternoon in her light spring suit and smart straw hat.

"Going," he repeated hoarsely. "Yes—I'm going, Miss Ambrose."

A bell buzzed viciously in the servants' quarters.

"Why—why what's the matter, Mr. Mohun? You're pale!"

He swallowed something, and found his hat. The man-servant came from below and went up to the library.

"Mr. Mohun! Are you ill?"

He shook his head and tried to pass her, but she blocked his way.

"What is the trouble?" she asked quiet-

ly. "You look as if—have you had some misunderstanding with father—don't mind that—he's in pain today—he'll be all right tomorrow."

He stared at her, and now he realized for the first time what he had done and what his action would mean for the future.

"Martha!" he cried, and the word died on his lips.

"Is it serious?" she asked simply.

He bowed and saw the servant descending the stairs. The man seemed puzzled what to do when he saw the couple still together. At the bottom of the flight he stopped and hesitated.

"Well, Mason—what is it?"

"Beg pardon, Miss Martha—I—I—"

But Dick cut short the man's excuses.

"It is only that I am detaining you, Miss Ambrose—probably your father wants you." And again he started for the door.

"Wait." Her voice was firm. "You may go, Mason."

As the man disappeared she drew Dick into the music room that opened on the hall.

"Now," she declared, "what is the meaning of all this?"

"The servant had orders to throw me out," Dick answered, "that is the meaning!"

"But still," her voice was low now, "I do not understand. I know men quarrel over business and forget all about it next month. You—and my father—have quarreled?"

"Good-by," he said and held out his hand. A little white glove slipped into it.

"That is all you have to tell me!"

"That is all!"

At the front door he turned; she was standing on the threshold of the room looking at him, one hand clutching the light summer curtains.

"Try to remember," he said brokenly, "that there are always two sides to every question."

Without another word, without even a good-by, he was gone. For an instant she stood staring at the closed door, and then very softly took her way to the library.

CHAPTER VIII

BLIND with rage, and with everything that was evil in him swelling to the surface, he walked westward and mechanically turned into Fifth Avenue. Heed-

less of those he passed, unmindful of the crossings and the signals of the traffic men, he followed the beautiful street southward till he reached a big hotel near Thirty-fifth Street. Here sanity returned to him, and the revulsion left him weak and nervous. He was one of those many men who lose control of themselves only once or twice in a lifetime, and are dangerous until their poise is regained. For a good half-hour Dick had seen red.

He entered the hotel and found his way to the bar. Ordinarily he seldom took a drink until dinner, and more often than not forgot it then, but now he wanted one. The café was crowded with the usual lot of prosperous patrons, familiar types of a popular spot; the place hummed with noise, and tobacco smoke hovered over all.

He was about to give his order when a hand was laid on his shoulder. He jumped like a nervous cat, and turning, saw the friendly face of Colonel Harrison beaming through the smoke. His nephew was with him. They then shook hands; the Colonel always performed this rite, whether from a sense of punctilious courtesy or an innate love for his fellow man would be hard to say. But today that hearty greeting was balm to Dick—the veteran little knew how much it meant to the young man. Then the rich voice boomed through the neighboring chatter.

"If you will allow me to offer a suggestion, sir, I can recommend a julep. I have found a bar-keeper here who was once employed at the Commonwealth Club of Richmond, and who can compound that glorious beverage better than any No'th-er I have ever met."

A man in a white coat slipped down the line of his associates, smiled at the Colonel and received the orders. The juleps were made, a glittering color scheme of green and white and frost.

"And how, sir," said the old gentleman, "is Mr. Ambrose, your employer, that great financier? It was with deep regret I heard of his accident. I trust you found him improving when you saw him this afternoon. I shall give myself the pleasure of calling upon him tomorrow."

Dick did not hesitate; no thought of any business obligation to his late employer bound his tongue; he saw only a very lovable old man before him about to be injured by an unprincipled man of money.

"I am glad to have met you," he replied in a low voice. "I have something of very

grave importance to tell you, Colonel Harrison—and you also," he added to Ashley.

The Colonel saw that the young man was in deadly earnest.

"If that is so we had better find a quiet corner."

Glasses in hand they found an empty table in a far corner where there were no eavesdroppers.

"I am no longer in Mr. Ambrose's employ," Dick began. "An hour ago I was fired out of his house."

Both his hearers stared at him in astonishment. "You surprise me, sir," was all the Colonel could say.

"As it is only fair to you," the young man continued, "and only just to myself to explain this rotten business, I am going to tell you exactly what happened."

Then in the midst of the hubbub about them, with the tobacco smoke curling over their heads and the babble of strangers' voices in their ears, Dick told.

The fingers of the Colonel's hand tightened on the frosted glass as the revelation proceeded. Ashley uttered one violent exclamation and then lapsed into silence. Dick had full control of himself now as he told the sordid story, but his cheeks had grown pale when he finished.

"The damned scoundrel!" said the old man when the speaker ended.

Ashley lit a cigarette, carefully laid the match across another in the ash tray, took one long piercing glance at Dick, another shorter one at the Colonel, and said nothing.

"HAD you not told me, Mr. Mohun, I could never have believed it."

The voice of the Virginian was that of a man hurt to the core; he was an old man and a proud man, and deceit or treachery in another was a wound. So explicit was his faith in others that he never expressed a single doubt as to the truth of Dick's statements, nor did Ashley—Mohun remembered that faith through all his later life. He leaned elbow on table, chin in hand, and spoke slowly.

"That is all," he said. "I have exaggerated nothing, hidden nothing."

Ashley Harrison looked up from a brown study. "I believe it," he said simply. "I have never liked Ambrose, but I did not think him capable of—this"—and he made a gesture. The Colonel buried his face in the tall glass before him, disdaining straws

and the crushed ice at the top of the drink. When he raised his head some flecks of ice clung to his white moustache.

"My poor little road!" he murmured.

"Oh, thunder! Uncle Pow," said Ashley. "Cheer up, sir! You've had a lucky escape—not a calamity—there are dozens of others who can put the road on its feet."

"Do you really think so, Ashley?"

"Think? I know so. With your permission I'll speak to Mr. Brewster tomorrow—he's an able man and I know he's honest—and Mr. Mohun here will help us, I'm sure—perhaps he knows some one who would be interested in the loan?"

"It can be handled, Mr. Harrison, I am quite sure of that."

The Colonel straightened in his chair and leaning forward laid a gnarled, old hand on Dick's.

"Mr. Mohun! In my own selfish disappointment and mortification I was forgetting, sir, what the R. & W. owes to you—and what I owe you personally. I do not say that your career is ruined, for under such a man as that contemptible hound—you could never have remained for any length of time—so your career lies in your future, and if there is anything that a Harrison of Virginia can do to help you—By God! sir, I will do it. Allow me to express my most sincere respect and admiration for the manner in which you have acted. Like a man, sir, as your own great grandfather and his grandfather ahead of him would have acted—you have partly reconciled me to my faith in human nature."

Dick was horribly embarrassed and mumbled something or other in reply. Then the Colonel threw back his head and when he spoke it was the young Major Harrison of Gettysburg, Cold Harbor and the Wilderness.

"And now, Ashley!" he thundered. "What shall I do to this damnable skunk?"

"Sh-h-h!" advised the nephew.

"Sh-h-h! be damned, sir," cried the indignant old warrior. "I will be heard! What shall I do? I cannot horsewhip an injured man, and the laws of this damned country prevent me from calling him out—as I could have done fifty years ago. What am I to do with him?"

HIS nephew beckoned to a waiter. "Three of the same," he ordered. Then he spoke affectionately to his uncle.

"We'll sleep over it, Uncle Pow. Personally I know you're well out of the mess—but you, Mohun—what are you going to do?"

"I hadn't thought about it," Dick answered. "I've been so mad over the whole business I've had no time to think—I'll get a job somewhere."

"In the same business, I reckon."

"Yes—I like the work."

Ashley Harrison thought for a second. When he spoke there was no question of his earnestness.

"Before you decide definitely, Mohun, will you let me know? Believe me, I have reasons for asking."

"Certainly—if you wish it."

"I do! Hello! here are our life-savers! Now, Uncle Pow!"

And once more they found solace.

ON the first of July the firm of Harrison & Mohun, members of the Consolidated Stock Exchange, started business.

In looking back on those six crowded weeks Dick was scarcely able to remember the sequence of events. But they followed logically, without break or radical disagreement, until the firm was an accomplished fact, offices rented, duties decided and the announcement appeared in the papers.

The formation of the firm had been natural enough. Ashley Harrison was nearing thirty; he had had seven years experience in the office of Brewster and Company, a well-known firm, he was popular and had some patronage, and he wished to start in business for himself. But he had no money. Dick wanted a job, he liked brokerage, he had had some valuable training, and he had a little money.

Colonel Harrison was fond of his nephew and wanted him to succeed. He liked Dick, and stood ready to help the young men as far as his own moderate means allowed. It had been Ashley Harrison's thought at first and the uncle had heartily approved of it. A few days after the meeting at the Waldorf the three again met and the proposition was put squarely to Dick.

Ashley figured that a capital of twenty-five thousand dollars would be needed. With this a membership in the Consolidated could be bought and all the initial expenses incident to opening an office be at their command, while there would be enough left to carry on the business for a year in a modest and conservative way.

Between them, uncle and nephew stood

ready to furnish half of this proposed capital—would Dick care to consider such a partnership and supply the other moiety. Colonel Harrison would not be a member of the firm or partnership, whatever they determined on; his interest would be only in its success.

Dick asked for a couple of days to think it over. In that time he came to two conclusions: he liked the idea of an intimate partnership with Ashley, and he believed the two of them could make a success of the business. He knew that Harrison was well thought of on the street and had some influential friends, a combination that should spell business; he was confident of his own powers to handle the office end of the firm and hoped to bring some business of his own.

He therefore determined to accept the proposal, and the young men were busy from that minute. Dick rented the offices, engaged a few necessary clerks, and attended to the advertising, while Ashley wound up his affairs at Brewster and Company, saw his personal friends, and took up the question of the R. & W. loan with old Charles Brewster, the head of that firm.

TO the delight of all concerned, Mr. Brewster thought very favorably of it. Colonel Harrison wrote Mr. Ambrose a letter. Ashley had dissuaded him from any personal interview, and severed all business and personal acquaintance. The banker was too wise to reply to it, and before Mr. Luce could frame any other scheme to get control of the road, Brewster and Company had the affair well under way. It seemed an omen of good luck that on the day the firm-name of Harrison and Mohun appeared on an office-building directory, that very day the new stock issue of the R. & W. was subscribed, and the Virginia families rested content with some sixty per cent of the stock. Mr. Brewster gave Ashley a handsome commission, and a new firm appeared in the financial district.

The young men found their work cut out for them, but on the whole they did better than they had any right to expect. Under ordinary circumstances a young stock-brokerage firm is dependent on conditions over which it has no control. It cannot solicit business with much dignity, it cannot create a market for a stock as a hardware merchant exploits a can-opener, and it suffers from the vagaries of its own pub-

lic. But the conditions of the money market fought for Harrison and Mohun, in sporting parlance "they got the breaks." It was an era of speculation and pyramiding, an epoch of easy money, and men who had never before ventured on the market did so with astonishing success. All classes of securities shared in the rise and men made money and went on their way rejoicing. Thus the new firm went on the Street at a favorable moment and got their proportion of the general success, but it was not all cakes and ale.

Henry M. Ambrose was a vindictive man and lost no opportunity to hurt his former secretary. The Drug and Chemical Bank became so indifferent in their service and matters of loans that another institution was selected. Some customers Ashley had counted on failed to materialize, and at two of the younger clubs where Dick had been proposed by Mr. Van Wikoff, an unaccountably long time elapsed before his name appeared on the board. And greatly to Dick's sorrow, both the junior partner and Mr. Hollingsworth treated him with distinct lack of courtesy.

But it was all in the game, and the young man bit his lips and kept silent. He kept his head, made friends, and by the first of the year he and Ashley could face the future with confidence.

He only saw Martha once during those busy months, at a dance of the younger set. She was surrounded by a crowd of adoring youths with Philip Amerton hovering in the background, and though she danced with Dick it was only a couple of times around the floor, and then she was claimed by the Varsity left tackle on his Christmas vacation. And her manner had been decidedly cold. Dick did not enjoy the rest of the evening and went home early.

As for other matters, life jogged along pleasantly enough. Grayson, once more safe and sound financially, was his fast friend and threw business in the firm's way; Jim Edwards had pleased him with a robust letter from some unknown spot in Lower California, whither he had wandered in pursuit of elusive wealth, and twice he heard from another friend of the great outdoors, Simon Walker of Wyoming. The cattleman promised himself an early trip to the salt water he had never seen, and Dick began to look forward to the coming visit.

Colonel Harrison was now uncle to both members of the firm, and insisted that

Dick spend Christmas at the Cross Roads, but business pressed and the young man had to stay in the city.

So passed summer and fall, and the New Year came to New York.

ON a February afternoon when New York was suffering the miseries of a thaw following a heavy snow, the office-boy, a fat-faced urchin who longed for the baseball season, brought in a visiting-card. It read:

Edward F. L. Mohun,
Calle Bernal Diaz,
City of Mexico.

Its owner followed, a tall ruddy-cheeked man, every inch an Englishman. After a word or two about the similarity of their family name, it dawned on Dick who his visitor was.

"I'm sure," he said cordially, "you must be the Mr. Mohun that my friend Jim Edwards spoke of—do sit down—how is Jim?"

"Right-o! And I fancy you're the Mr. Mohun I've come to see—Jim's a bit off color—fever, you know."

He produced a letter. "From Edwards," he said. The note was short but definite.

Dear Friend:

This will be given you by Ed Mohun who I spoke to you about when we met in your town. He is all right, you can believe what he tells you. Friend Dick we have struck it rich, Mohun and me, and maybe you can help us. Ed will give you the dope. If you can there will be a big killing for all of us.

I am well except I am sick just now. But it don't amount to shucks. So get busy, friend Dick, and don't waste no time.

Prontol as the greasers say.

Your friend,
J. EDWARDS.

Dick smiled as he read; the letter was characteristic of the writer. "I'm awfully sorry Jim's sick—where did you leave him, Mr. Moon—that's the way you pronounce it—isn't it?"

The visitor laughed, a pleasant, hearty laugh that smacked of good nature and the outdoors.

"Right-o! And a damned silly way too, but my people have always done so. Edwards, the poor chap, is lying doggo at La Paz—Lower California," he explained, "and a beastly country it is, all rocks and sand and alkali and heat—my word! the heat."

"I knew he was in Lower California, he

wrote me some time ago—now what can I do for you, Mr. Moon—have you struck gold?"

"Oil," the Englishman answered. "Millions of gallons of it just waiting to be taken out—but it's in the most desolate God-forsaken country that anybody ever laid their eyes on. Edwards is there, or will be, as soon as he gets a bit stronger, and I came to see you or Henry M. Ambrose or somebody who will finance the stuff for us."

DICK offered his visitor a cigar, lit a cigarette himself, and then gave orders through the office phone that he was not to be disturbed.

"Tell me about it," he said simply.

Edward Mohun spoke quietly and interestingly. Like Edwards he had lived so long in the open places he possessed the gift of picturing those places to his listeners, and the New Yorker once more saw a desolate, rocky, sandy country, and heard the tinkle of the mule bells, and felt and sensed the heat and the struggle and exhaustion of the days.

The Englishman had not been very successful after resigning from the Ward Syndicate, he confessed. The Crawford Concession had been a good thing, but there had come a cropper on it through circumstances they couldn't control. So he had left Northern Mexico in disgust and wandered over to the peninsula of Lower California hoping he might stumble on something or other that would pay. He wanted to have a look at that country anyway, he explained.

With a small pack train and one native to help him he had pushed down the western side of the Gulf of California, making little excursions here and there into the interior, traversing a country that was desolate and discouraging, and finally reached a miserable little settlement on the Gulf Coast without seeing a single bit of territory that promised reward.

At this settlement—and a wretched place it must have been, thought Dick—the prospector had been taken ill, dysentery or some trouble of that kind, and while lying there who should come along but Edwards, also looking for anything that might turn up.

The American at once assumed command of the situation. He got a woman to look after the sick man, found a priest who had some small knowledge of local mal-

adies, and by dint of bullying, persuasion and money made things as comfortable as he could for the Englishman.

"Looked after me as if I had been his own brother," was Mohun's comment. He recovered, and the two men joining forces went southward. To cut a long story short, at a point far from any settlement and at some distance from the coast, they discovered indications of oil. Both men were practical geological engineers, and both were convinced after some borings that they had struck a rich field.

At the capital of the province they found all this land was owned by a family which had grown rich under President Diaz, and that its legal representative could be found in the City of Mexico. To the capital then went Mohun, and found his man, a suave, oily Mexican named Da Costa, who moved with the times and watched the political winds.

The man had authority, and in the lamentable absence of the head of the Orocco family, "now enjoying the delights of Paris, señor, far removed from our distressed country," was willing to give an option for ninety days while tests could be made, for the sum of five hundred dollars. After that date—Señor Da Costa shrugged his shoulders.

The upshot of it was that Mohun paid the five hundred dollars, and got his written option. Then finding an old friend in the city who was an expert in oil soils, and as befitted the occupation, a man of speculative tendencies, the pair joined fortunes, procured the necessary equipment, and back-tracked to Lower California, the newcomer in the venture putting in a little money and a long experience.

More borings caused the eyes of the men to bulge; their oil bade fair to be a diamond mine, could it be developed properly.

The expert estimated it would cost at least one hundred thousand dollars to open up the pool, get the stuff to the coast and finally transport it by lighters to the nearest big port on the mainland. That was one way to develop their find; the alternative was to interest the Universal Oil Company or some other developing magnate. But all three men were opposed to this procedure; in their several capacities they had had dealings with the Universal people before this, and had no desire to make a small sum while the company made a huge profit. This time they would raise

the money themselves and enjoy the returns; U. O. could whistle. Back to the capital went the Englishman, authorized to drive the best possible bargain with Da Costa, and fortified with all the money the three had. When the facts were laid before him Señor Da Costa was overjoyed, and the cables to Paris began to hum. Eventually the Señor Orocco, of the delights of Paris, agreed for a consideration of five thousand dollars, to be paid before the expiration of the existing option, to extend said option for a further period of ninety days, during which time the brave Americans could raise the money necessary for the exploitation and development of the field. If this money was forthcoming, then he, speaking for the family, would execute a lease for all and sundry lands for a term of years at an annual rental based on the gross output of the wells, and he would hold—etc., etc. He only regretted that the distressed financial conditions of his beloved country and the grave uncertainty of the political situation rendered him unable to join with the American señores in this so-vast discovery, and he was their—etc., etc.

TO these terms Mohun was forced to comply. An extension of option was drawn and executed by Señor Da Costa, and the five thousand dollars were paid over, Mohun wishing to do so before he left Mexico to find the larger sum.

Then word came from the peninsular that Edwards had been sick but was convalescing, and the third man, Lindsay, enclosed a letter of introduction from Edwards to Dick, which the Englishman was to present at the first opportunity.

"So that's the story, Mr. Mohun. I'm here to raise this one hundred thousand dollars. I went first to see Ambrose who I hoped might be willing to take a chance to recoup on the unfortunate Crawford Concession—but he'll have nothing to do with it. He was a bit curt with me—rather! And he seems out of sorts with Mexico. By-the-way, may I ask if there is any hard feeling between you and Mr. Ambrose? The old chap seemed rather miffed when I asked for you."

"You can get no help from Henry M. Ambrose if I am mentioned in this matter," Dick answered grimly. "I was forced to leave him to save my own self-respect, and there is a good deal of feeling between us. If you want me to try and

help this promotion, you will have to count him out—or vice versa.”

“Oh, that’s too bad! But he will not touch it personally, so he need not be considered in the matter. Can you raise the money?”

Dick thought for a second. The proposition looked attractive. He could depend implicitly on Edwards, and he judged his visitor to be honest. But oil was oil and results uncertain.

“I certainly can try,” he answered at length, “but whoever we approach must necessarily have reports from their own engineers. Are you and Edwards willing to pay the expenses of such a man?”

“Of course—we expected to do that.”

“And if this one hundred thousand dollars can be raised and a company formed for the future work, you can start work at once?”

“**A**T once! I tell you, Mr. Mohun,”—the visitor brought the palm of his hand upon the desk with a whack that could be heard in the outer office,—“I tell you, sir, this is good! I’ve been in promoting and speculation more years than I like to count, and this is the best thing I’ve ever seen. I’ve dabbled in gold and silver and copper and platinum; I once got a rubber concession in Brazil and a nitrate concession in Chile; I struck oil in Oklahoma and oil in Pennsylvania—but this beats them all. I’ve made money and I’ve lost it, but this time I see a chance to make good money and make it for myself. I’m a poor man and so is Edwards, and Lindsay is down and out—but every one of us is willing to put up his last cent to exploit this field and stay by her until she pumps—and pump she will—or not one of us has ever seen a derrick before. This five thousand dollars about cleans us out, but in she went, and if we can get the one hundred thousand dollars we’ll see a million before two years are out. Only one thing can stop us—this cursed political situation in Mexico—but if the revolt holds off long enough to let us get started, we’ll have money enough to buy any Mexican government that succeeds Madero. If the old chap stays in power, we won’t have to bribe; our legitimate franchise will be the only expense. Madero is honest if nothing else. So I am praying things won’t come to a head there for a year or two—now, sir—will you get busy?”

“I will,” said Dick.

“**O**NE word more,” advised the older Mohun. “I told you I was with the Ward Syndicate for years,—maybe I was a fool to leave them for they’re jolly square people,—but if everything else fails, it might be possible to get them interested. They know Mexico, and they know Mexican politics better than anybody else save Universal Oil—and they know me. If they are satisfied with an expert report they might come in on what you people call a 50-50 basis. I don’t say they would, for they always insist on control in whatever they handle—but they might. It’s worth considering. I would rather not approach them until you sound your own parties, but if it comes to the pinch I’m willing—and so is Edwards.”

“I’ll talk this matter over with my partner this afternoon,” said Dick. “He knows more people than I do and he’s been in the game longer—and between us I think we can start something. There is one firm I know who can help us. Have you a copy of your option?”

The Englishman produced it and Dick read it carefully.

“No question about the man Da Costa’s responsibility?”

“None whatever. He’s represented the Orocco family for years.”

“Very good! Now where are you staying, and how long will you be in New York?”

The other named his hotel and announced his determination to stay in the city until Dick had some kind of news one way or the other. With that they parted, the Englishman accepting Dick’s invitation to dinner the following evening.

DICK passed the next month in a whirl of excitement and in an atmosphere of oil. At the start what he didn’t know about oil would have filled volumes; at the finish he knew all that books could teach him and experts and prospectors tell him. Thrown into a new surrounding and hemmed in by his own ignorance he became interested in the subject, and like many another American absorbed eagerly all that could be taught him.

Ashley Harrison wasn’t interested in oil and kept out of the business, but he introduced his partner to a few men who might help him, and through those men Dick gradually met or heard of the big oil men of the country. But all roads seemed to lead to the offices of Universal Oil.

This huge corporation dominated the oil interests of the world. Their knowledge was exact, their ramifications innumerable, their power absolute. They had the best men in the world on their pay roll, and the world was fly-specked with their agents. They were always willing to pay for information and value received, and to fight them was like running your head against a stone wall. Dick of course had some idea of their power before he started his campaign, but at the end of three days he found himself in a blind alley.

Mr. Brewster, who liked him, and who was the first man he approached, put the issue in a few words.

"Mohun," said the old gentleman, "the best thing you can do is to go straight to Universal Oil. If you've got a good thing they will take it off your hands and pay you handsomely. If it's not worth while touching they'll tell you so, and nobody else will touch it when they have turned it down. You can see that yourself—have you seen Universal Oil, will be the very first question put by any moneyed man you see. No use to dicker with them. If they make you a proposition—take it or leave it—Universal Oil wastes no time in bargaining. And if it's a really good thing they'll get it anyway—they are quite capable of starting a revolution in Mexico should they want your field—so see them and take what they are willing to give you."

DICK naturally demurred at this. He was young, he was self-confident and he hated to take his hat off to a soul-less corporation. So he stuck doggedly to his task and interviewed half a dozen New York men who had made money in previous oil ventures.

But he found, as he expected to find, a disinclination to sink real money in any Mexican enterprise. "Form a company—by all means; sell the stock to all who will buy it—gladly—most gladly—but don't ask us to put money, actual cash, in Mexico. Things are too uncertain down there, Mr. Mohun; no telling how long President Madero will remain in power—we can't touch it."

This was the answer he received daily, and those who warned him of the uncertainty of things Mexican were justified in their statements. Wall Street is a very accurate barometer of the events, the conditions, and the undercurrents that exist

all over the world. And Universal Oil is the very bulb of the mercury. This corporation knows more about what is happening in Madagascar, Somaliland and Tibet, and knows it earlier, than the Department of State at Washington. And its information is more accurate. As a consequence Wall Street responds to the mercury and is singularly shy in embarking in any enterprise that Universal Oil condemns.

So Dick's early steps as an oil promoter were met with difficulties and obstacles. Yet the proposition looked so good!

WORD came from Edwards in Lower California that Lindsay had secured some experienced drillers and that actual work would start at once. Long technical reports followed, so much Greek to Dick until he learned their meaning, but full of information to certain men he tried to interest. He learned new and strange sounding words; stratigraphy, domes, clines and anticlines and a dozen others that fairly charmed him by their mystery. He learned the enlightening fact that oil and water are found together despite the old copybook maxims to the contrary, and the strange news that an oil pool was sometimes found in the middle of a lake or river. But at the end of a month, with all the knowledge he amassed, he was no nearer realization of the project than on the day Mohun the prospector walked into his office. The Englishman, however, proved to be a reasonable man. He knew the difficulties in an oil flotation as well as anybody and he soon learned the pulse of the financial market. He found no fault with Dick's efforts nor was he fool enough to rush in wildly himself and blacken the proposition by hawking it around in one direction while his associate was trying in another. On the contrary he was of invaluable assistance in suggesting certain men to see and advising Dick to keep away from others who possessed experience but had bad reputations. So passed the month without one ray of hope.

But if there was no man who showed any friendly interest in Lower California and its oil, there was one man who took a deep and unfriendly interest in the matter. That man, of course, was Henry M. Ambrose. He soon learned of Dick's activity in trying to raise money for an oil venture and of his association with the elder Mohun. From the Englishman he had

learned the location of the pool and the general facts of its ownership. The rest was easy to find. The banker had unofficial agents everywhere, who kept him advised along all lines of activity, and in a couple of weeks he knew as much about the matter as Dick did. He at first went into the business more as a matter of curiosity than anything else, but on discovering that there really existed a possibility for some one to make money, he went into it with zest. He hated Dick and wished to crush him; he bore a grudge against the Englishman, an unjust one to be sure, but still a grudge, and he wanted to repay it. And finally, if money could be made in Lower California, Henry M. Ambrose wanted to make it for himself. Though a vindictive man, he seldom allowed his feelings to outrun his common sense and he moved with care. An agent in Mexico City found Señor Da Costa and reported on the existing option; another agent in the guise of a prospector journeyed to the field and found Edwards, Lindsay and others in possession, and a third, and a much bigger man, sounded certain political worthies in the capital as to the feeling over new American franchises and the exact standing that the Mexican landowner, Señor Oroczzo, held with the existing government and the opposition. These measures cost considerable money, but the banker was not the man to balk at a few thousands if he saw a chance to knife a man he hated.

Two things became clear to him; there was a strong possibility that Mohun the Englishman and the prospector Edwards had stumbled on a good thing, and it was more than possible that even if they found the \$100,000 the deal might never be swung, so equally was the political situation in Mexico.

Mr. Ambrose smiled grimly and looked at the ceiling—time would show—mean-

while he would get in touch with the Oroczzo family.

BUT meanwhile the two Mohuns had come to a decision. Just as Mr. Brewster had prophesied, all roads led to Universal Oil; or failing that huge corporation, owing to the prejudice and enmity of Edwards and Lindsay, the Ward Syndicate. No individual capitalist would look at Lower California, it must be the Wards or nothing. So with their pride in their pockets, with Dick discouraged at repeated rebuffs, initiated with the world of finance in general and mad at himself, the two men sought the head of the Ward Syndicate.

This gentleman was a big man with few illusions. He knew oil, and what he didn't know about Mexico wasn't worth knowing. But he also knew the Englishman, therefore he was courteous without wasting time. He would look into the matter; a letter of introduction to this Mr. Edwards was all that would be necessary at present; he was very glad to have renewed Mr. Mohun's acquaintance again—and good morning!

The visitors left the office with Dick feeling more discouraged than ever. The Englishman laughed.

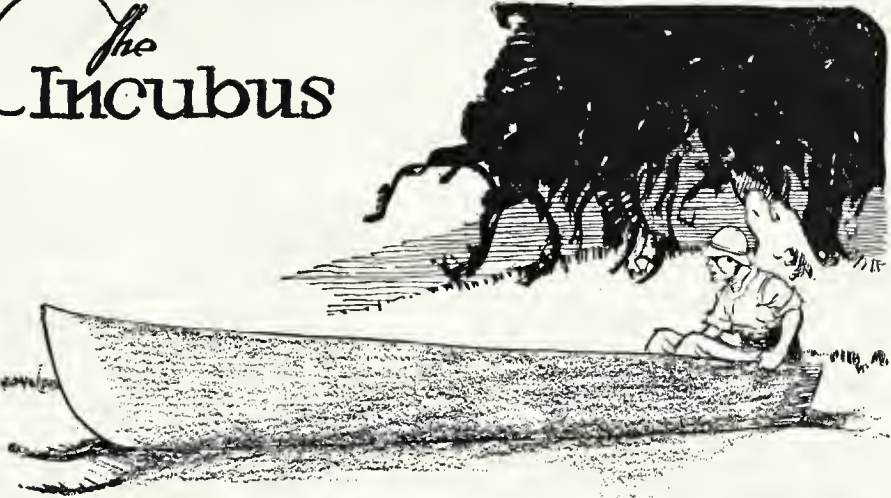
"Doesn't waste any time, that old chap, does he! But no matter, he'll act quickly, see if he doesn't. Don't get the blues, Mohun; it's all in the game. I must leave you here—due uptown. 'By!"

Dick returned to his office bluer than the proverbial indigo, but his gloom was somewhat lightened by a letter lying on his desk.

It was from his Western acquaintance, Simon Walker. Unless something very unforeseen happened the Wyoming stockman would be in New York the next month—and Dick was to be ready with bells on.

THE second absorbing installment of this new novel of finance will appear in the next—the May—number of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

The Incubus



Achmed Abdullah

THE darkness that is Africa is brilliantly depicted in this weird story of a white man alone in the jungle.

SPEAKING in after years about that period of his life, Lloyd Merriwether, being a New Englander and thus congenitally given to dissecting his motives and reactions and screwing them into test-tubes, used to add, by way of psychological comment, that it wasn't the big things that mattered in a crisis, but the small ones; and that, by the same token, it was not the big things one missed when one was away from that blending of hackneyed efficiency and pinchbeck mechanical process called Civilization, but the petty, negligible ones—those that have grown to become second nature, almost integrally part of one's self, like one's eyes, or ears, or nose.

Now—he would say—take, for example, a razor-strop or a box of talc powder. Take a bottle of eau de Cologne or witch hazel; or, if you prefer, a nail buffer, a pair of toilet scissors, or what not.

Silly, foolish, tinsel things, you say? Rubbish a man can do without just as well? Well—don't you believe it! Not for a single, solitary moment!

Oh, yes! You can do without all that truck when you are home, all snug and taut and comfortable—with shops around you on every street so that you know you can buy them, if the spirit moves you and you have the price. Sure.

But suppose you find yourself somewhere at the back of the beyond, where you can't buy the fool things for love or money—absolutely cannot get them. Why, at that very moment, those flummeries become vital—vital not from a pathological angle, because you always want what you can't get, but really, truly, physically vital.

It was that which meant the tragedy of the whole thing.

You bet. Tragic! Although—not—because it was so ludicrous, straight through. For, you know, I was quite out of my head when that fellow from the Angom Presbyterian Mission picked me up. What was his name? Oh, yes. Morrison. Doctor Sylvester Morrison, an Englishman, and a very decent chap.

I WAS a raving lunatic when he found me. I sat there screeching some musical-comedy song of a few years back—"Gee—but this is a lonesome town!" or something of the sort.

Say! It must have sounded funny, back yonder, in the heart of Africa, with the sun rays dropping straight down from a brazen sky to shatter themselves upon the hard-baked surface into sparkling, adamantine dust—to rise again in a dazzling vapor.

Oh, yes. Very funny, no doubt!

And then I went for Doctor Morrison with my knife. Lucky for him that I had used my last cartridge.

Well, to go back to the beginning, I felt

a presentiment of coming disaster shortly after I was faced by the fact that those ochre-smearing, plum-colored Fang coons had run away during the night, as fast as their skinny legs would let them. I never did find out what made them stampede, nor cared to discover the reason why. You know what they are like—half children and half apes, and chuck-full of animistic superstitions and the inhibitions that go with them. I guess they must have heard a drum-signal boom-booming through the night—some brute of a flat-nosed, tattooed medicine-man brewing his smelly craft somewhere in the miasmatic jungle to the north, and giving them the tip that I was “dam bad ju-ju.” At any rate, there I found myself that morning, on the upper reaches of the Ogowe River, a day’s journey below Boue, a week from the coast, and all alone.

I was rather annoyed. You know, Africa raises Cain with a white man’s nerves and general amiability. And if I could have caught one of those runaway coons, I would have given him what was coming to him with my hippo-hide whip. But it was no use trailing them in the jungle. The wilderness had swallowed them, and so I contented myself with cursing them in English and Freetown pidgin.

Afraid of being alone?

Not I. You see, I wasn’t a greenhorn, but an old Africander, dyed-in-the-wool, dyed-in-the-trek, and able to take care of myself. I knew that particular part of the French Congo better than I know my native Cape Cod, and I really did not need a guide; nor porter for that matter, since I was to go the rest of the way by canoe.

Nor was I afraid of any stray natives popping out of the bush. I’ve always been friends with them. I am not an adventurer—seeking for the rainbow, the pretty little rainbow that usually winds up in a garbage can—not an explorer, nor a soldier. I am a business man, pure and simple, and I needed the natives to bring me rubber and ivory and gold-dust, while they needed me to get them their particular hearts’, and stomachs’, desires—American cloth, and beads, and pocketknives, and Worcester sauce, and Liverpool trade gin, and rifles that didn’t shoot and similar truck. Of course, I did ’em brown whenever I had half a chance, and I guess they returned the compliment. So we had mutual respect for each other, and I wasn’t scared of them—not the slightest bit.

As soon as I discovered that my Fangs had stampeded, I took stock of my belongings, and I saw that they had not taken much—in fact, nothing except the little waterproofed pack which contained my toilet articles, mirror and razor and shaving-brush and comb and all the rest. Struck me as funny at the time. I said to myself that those Fangs were fools—damned fools. They might have helped themselves to some of my other packs as easy as pie. Food, you know, tobacco, beads, all that. But they had not. Why? God only knows. I told you before that they’re half children and half apes.

So I had a good laugh at their expense.

Well—I didn’t laugh much a few days later.

THERE I was, then, in the crawling, stinking heart of Africa, all alone, and—for the moment, at least—cheerful enough. For I *am* a business man, and I told myself that those fool negroes had saved me a tidy little penny by bolting, since I owed them a month’s wages. Too, I was well supplied with everything a fellow needs in the wilderness, from quinine to matches, from tabloid beef to—oh, tabloid fish cakes. My health, but for occasional, woozy fever spats—they being part of Africa’s eternal scenery and accepted as such—was first-rate, and my canoe a snug, comfy little affair that pulled as easy as a feather.

I decided that I would just drift along down the Ogowe River to the estuary, and no hurry—not a darned bit of hurry. The Ogowe is not a treacherous water; the channel is clearly marked most of the way, and the mangroves sit rather well back—like hair on the brow of a professional patriot, eh?

As to the pack with my toilet articles? Well, what did it matter? There weren’t any women kicking around loose in that part of the Dark Continent to care or fuss if my hair was long or short, my complexion smooth or stubby, my finger-nails round or square. Blessed relief, in fact, to be independent of one’s outer man, I thought.

So, I repeat, I was quite cheerful—for a few seconds, perhaps minutes.

BUT, almost immediately, I knew that my cheerfulness was faked—faked by myself, subconsciously, for my own, private, especial benefit; almost immediately, I

sensed that vague, crushing presentiment of coming disaster I told you about—and my nerves began to jump sideways and backward, like a whisky-primed Highland Scot when he hears the whir of the war pipes.

Of course, being a sensible fellow, and not imaginative, I tried to crystallize my nervous presentiment. Couldn't, though. It was too subtle, too elusive—too damned African, to put it in the proverbial nutshell. All I was sure of was a sort of half-feeling—and I've had it before and since—that Africa was not a continent, but—oh, a being, a sinister, hateful, cruel, brooding monster, with a heart and soul and desires—rotten desires, mostly—and that this Africa hated me, because I was white, because I was an interloper, because I had no business there except—well, dollars and cents.

Yes. A mass of rocks and rivers and forests and jungles, this Africa, but with the physical, even the spiritual attributes of man—and I used to brood on that thought until often, in my dreams, I felt like taking Africa by the throat and throttling it as I would an enemy. Silly, too, since I needed Africa for the benefit of my bank-account and the encouragement of my creditors.

Never mind, though.

I just *couldn't* crystallize that damned, sneaking, ghastly presentiment, and so, knowing even at the time that it was a lie, I said to myself:

"Fever, old man! Go ahead, and do the regular thing!"

I did. I dosed myself with quinine and Warburg's and a wee nip of three-star just to top it off. Then I packed my canoe with a fairly steady hand, jumped in, balanced it and pushed off, gliding between the banks of the Ogowe River.

REMEMBER my telling you that I had intended drifting along slowly, that I was in no hurry?

Well, the moment my paddle fanned the water, I reconsidered, subconsciously. I decided, again subconsciously, that I was in a devil of a hurry, that I must get away from the hinterland, from the Congo, from the whole of Africa.

I said to myself that, arrived at the coast, I would catch the first mail-boat bound for Liverpool and then on to America. No—I wouldn't even wait for the mail-boat. I would go straight aboard the

first dirty tramp steamer that came wallowing up from the south, and beat it home.

Home! That's what I needed! And rest, rest—and a white man's big, crimson drink in a white man's proper surroundings—with white-aproned saloon-keepers and stolid policemen and, maybe, a night-court magistrate or two all complete. I wanted to be shut for a while from this stinking, brooding, leering Africa. I wanted America, the white man's land, the white man's blessed, saving vices and prejudices.

How I longed for it, longed for it as if it were a woman, as I paddled down the river!

Of home I thought, of foolish things—New York, and dear, garish Fifth Avenue all agleam with shop windows and the screaming brasses of passing automobiles, and the soda place around the corner on Forty-second, and the night boat to Boston—and a solid hour with the ads in back of the magazines. And then I looked about me and I saw Africa, putrid, acrid! And, gee! How I hated it—hated it!

I pulled myself together. Sure, more quinine, more Warburg's, and another nip of the stuff. Back to the paddle with all my strength—and the canoe flying along like a sentient being.

I paddled as if all the furies were after me. Just opened a tin at random, sneaked forty winks now and then, and off again, though my hands were raw and blistered, my back sore and strained till I nearly shrieked, my legs numb from the knees down, my eyes red-rimmed and smarting with watching the current.

Three days. Four. Five—

And the work! And the sweat! And the heat! Why, man, all the heat of all the universe seemed to have gathered into a tight, crimson ball poised directly above my eyes.

But I kept right on, with always the picture of home before my mind's eyes. Home, white faces, hundreds and hundreds of them, houses of stone, paved streets, a sun which did not maim and kill, then dinner, plain, clean, as dinner should be, the theater, and over it all the sweet home scent.

On the sixth day, I fell in a faint. Picked myself up again, rescued my paddle that was about to float away downstream, swallowed an opium pill, and called myself a fool. Perhaps it was the last helped the most. At all events, I was off again. But I felt weak. I felt conscious of a

sickening sensation of nameless horror—and—do you know what I was afraid of?

I'll tell you. Myself. Yes, myself! I was afraid of—myself. Momentarily, I crystallized it. Myself—and you'll see the reason presently.

THAT day I did get into a mangrove swamp; a thick and oozy one, too, with the spiky orchids coming down in a waxen, odorous avalanche, and all sorts of thorny plants reaching down and out as if trying to rip the heart out of my body, as if trying to impede my progress, to keep me there. My hands and face were lacerated, my clothes torn, but I didn't care. By main force, I jerked the canoe free and was off again, whipping the water like a madman; and the fear, the horror, the vague presentiment always growing!

And my hatred of Africa, it nearly choked me! And the loneliness! The loneliness which lay across my heart, my soul, my body, like a sodden blanket, and the fear that I would never reach home.

I lost all track of time. A week to make the coast, I had figured; and here it was at the very least the tenth day, and still my paddle went, still the river slid before my eyes like a watered-silk ribbon, still Africa unrolled like an odorous, meaningless scroll, still at my back rode horror and fear.

I don't know how I missed the main channel, got lost in one of the numerous smaller rivers that empty into the Ogowe. At all events, late one afternoon, I found myself in a narrow, trickly stream, with my paddle touching ground every second stroke, and the banks to right and left like frowning, sardonic walls. It wasn't a river any more—but just a watery sort of jungle trail, hardly discernible, wiped by the poisonous breath of the tropics into a dim, smelly mire which frothed and bubbled and sucked and seemed to reach out for those who dared tread its foul solitude.

I pushed on, through an entangled, exuberant commingling of leaves and lasciviously scented, fantastic flowers that vaulted above me like an arch, cutting my way through the mangrove that opened before my canoe, with a dull, gurgling sob, then closed behind me, with a vicious, popping gulp, as if the jungle had stepped away to let me through, leisurely, contemptuously, invincibly, to bar my way should I attempt to return!

On—and then, I don't know what hap-

pened to me. I don't know if night came, or if the creepers closed above me, shutting off the light of the sun, or if, momentarily, I became blind. I only remember that although, like an automaton, my hand kept on wielding the paddle, everything turned black around me and the next thing I remember is that I shivered all over as if in an ague, that cold sweat was running down my face, that I groped for the quinine—could not find it.

Too, I remember, a sudden glimpse of jungle natives—dwarfs, you know, the useless African tatters of a pre-Adamite breed. I saw two or three of them in the blackish-green gloom of the trees, flitting past, gliding, indistinct. They blended into the jungle, like brown splotches of moss on the brown, furry tree-trunks, and they gave no sign of life except a rolling flash of eyeballs—white, staring with that aspect of concentrated attention so typical of savages.

I recollect, vaguely, shouting at them, for help, I suppose, my voice seeming to come across illimitable distances.

Too, I recollect how they ran away, the jungle folding about them like a cloak. Then I felt a dull jar as I fell on my hands and knees in the bottom of the canoe and rolled over.

I CAME to, I don't know how many hours later. I was cold and wet and shivery, and then I noticed that rain was coming down like a cataract. And at once I knew that I was dying. Dying! Sure. Straight through my delirium, I realized it. Realized, too, that only one thing would help me to cheat death: a sound roof over my head, sound flooring under my feet, sound walls about—a house, in other words. A real, honest-to-God white man's house where I could take off my clothes and keep dry and warm, and give the quinine and the Warburg's a chance to work.

A house! In that part of Africa! Might as well have wished for the moon!

And then, suddenly, I saw it—yes, a house!

It was not a hallucination, an optical illusion, a mirage, my delirious mind playing follow-the-leader with my eyes—and my prayers. It was real. Solid stone and wood and corrugated iron and a chimney and windows and doors all complete, like a bit of suburbia dropped in the jungle. I saw it through the steaming, lashing rain,

on a little knoll due north, perhaps a quarter of a mile away from the river.

I jumped out of the canoe, landed, with clutching hands, in the mangrove, pulled myself up, ran as fast as I could, stumbling, tripping, falling, plunging. I hardly felt the thorns that scratched my face and hands and tore my clothes into ribbons.

I struggled on, with the one thought in my mind: the house—warmth—life!

How had the house got there?

Weeks later, I found out. Doctor Morrison told me, sitting by my bedside in the hospital.

It seemed that some imaginative chap of a West Coast trader had come up to London on his yearly spree. He must have been as eloquent as an Arab, for he met some City bigwigs that were reeking with money, and persuaded them that the French Congo hinterland was God's own paradise, and just waiting to give them fifty per cent on their investment, if they were willing to come through handsome. They were, and they did. They supplied a working capital big enough to make a Hebrew angel weep with envy. "Gaboon, Limited," they called the new company, with laconic pride, and for some reason—the usual, you know, social stuff, Mayfair and Belgravia flirting with Lombard and Threadneedle streets—they appointed some fool of a younger son as general manager, the sort of gink whose horizon is limited by Hyde Park Corner and Oxford Circus, and who knows all about the luxuries of life, which to him are synonymous with the necessities. Well, he went out to the coast, up the river, took a look at the scenery, and decided that the first thing to do would be to build a suitable residence for his festive self. He did so, and I guess the imaginative West Coast trader who was responsible for the whole thing must have helped him. Naturally—think of the commissions he must have pocketed from the Coast people: commissions for stone and wood and glass and bricks and cement and what not.

Yes, that was the sort of house our younger son built for himself. Darn the expense! He was stubborn if nothing else. The house was built; he moved in, and three weeks later some flying horror bit him in the thumb, and he promptly kicked the bucket. About the same time our imaginative West Coast trader disappeared with what was left of the working capital of "Gaboon, Limited," and nothing re-

mained of that glorious African enterprise except the house, that incongruous, ludicrous, suburban house in the heart of the tropics—Westchester-in-the-Congo, eh?

I guess the natives must have considered it "bad ju-ju," for they left it severely alone.

And it *was* bad ju-ju. I know.

ALL right. I made for it, running, stumbling, soaked to the skin. I pushed open the door, and, at once, I became conscious of a terrible, overpowering fear. Rather, it seemed as if the vague, crushing foreboding which I had sensed all the way down the river had suddenly peaked to an apex; as if the realization of that presentiment—the physical realization, mind you!—was waiting for me somewhere within the house. Waiting to leap upon me, to kill me!

But what could I do?

Outside was the rain, and the miasmatic jungle stench, and fever, and certain death—while inside?

I STUMBLED across the threshold, and, instinctively, I pulled my revolver from my waterproofed pocket.

I remember how I yelled at the empty, spooky rooms:

"I will defend myself to the last drop of my blood!"

Quite melodramatic, eh? Incredibly, garishly so, like a good old Second Avenue five-acter where the hero is tied to the stake and the villain does a war-dance around him with brandished weapons.

I couldn't help myself. I felt that ghastly, unknown, invisible enemy of mine the moment I was beyond the threshold. At first he was shrouded, ambiguous. But he was there. Hidden somewhere in the great, square entrance hall and peeping in upon my mind, my sanity.

Momentarily, I controlled myself with a tremendous, straining effort. I said to myself, quite soberly, that I had come here to get dry, to take off my clothes, and so I sat down on a rickety, heat-gangrened chair and began kicking off my water-logged boots.

I got up again, in a hurry, yelling, trembling in every limb.

For he, my unknown, invisible enemy, had sat down by my side. I could feel him blow over my face, my neck, my hands, my chest, my legs, like a breath of icy wind. That's the only way to put it.

So, as I said, I got up again in a hurry, and I ran away, shrieking at the top of my lungs, peering into every corner, revolver in my right hand, finger on trigger, ready to fight, fight to death, if my enemy would only come out into the open—if only he *would* fight!

"Coward! Oh, you dirty, sneaking coward!" I yelled at him. "Come out here and show your face, and fight like a man!"

And I laughed, derisively, to get his goat; and then I could hear his answering laughter, coming in staccato, high-pitched bursts:

"Ho-ho-ho!"

Too, I heard him move about, somewhere right close to me, behind me, and I decided to use a stratagem. I decided to stand quite still, then to turn with utter suddenness and take him by surprise; to pounce upon him and kill him. Surely, I said to myself, if I turned quick enough, I would be able to see him.

So I stood there, motionless, tense, waiting, my mind rigid; my heart going like a trip-hammer; my right hand gripping my revolver; my left clenched until the knuckles stretched white.

And I did turn, suddenly, my revolver leaping out and up, a shout of triumph on my lips. But—he was not there. He had disappeared. I could hear his footsteps pattering away through one of the

farther rooms, and, too, his maniacal, staccato laughter.

Oh, how I hated him, hated him! And I ran after him, through room after room, shouting:

"I'll get you, you dirty coward, I'll get you! Oh, I'll get you and kill you!"

AND then, in a room on the top floor, I came face to face with him!

It was quite light there, with the sun rays dropping in like crackling spears, and as he came toward me, I could make out every line in his face.

Tall he was, and gaunt and hunger-bitten and dreadfully pale, with yellowish-green spots on his high cheekbones, and his peaked chin covered with a week's growth of black stubbles, and a ragged mustache. His face was a mass of scars and bleeding scratches and cuts; and in his right hand he held a revolver—levelled straight at my heart.

I fired first, and there was an enormous crash, and—

Sure! I had fired into a mirror, a big mirror. At myself. Had not recognized myself. What with lack of razor and shaving-brush and looking-glass—and delirium—and fever—

Yes, yes. It's the small things, the little foolish, negligible things one misses when one is away from civilization.

Pass the bottle, will you!

"FREE LANCES IN DIPLOMACY"

A SUDDEN attack of illness interrupted Clarence Herbert New in his work on the Free Lance story which was to have appeared in this issue. We are happy to announce that he is recovering and that next month this remarkable series will be resumed with a specially attractive story. We describe his work as *remarkable* advisedly. "Free Lances in Diplomacy" are not only exceptionally interesting stories and not only one of the longest sustained series ever published—they began under the title "An Agent of the Government" in 1909: they are also a fascinating and authentic history of the international events of our time.

Bennington's Lemons



George
Allan
England

REMEMBER Bartholomew Bennington, who undertook to install a shower-bath contraption and got into such deep, deep trouble? Poor Bartholomew — he seems to have a genius for difficulties! Just read what happened to him when he bought a Caribbean lemon-farm!

WHEN Bartholomew Bennington, from under the sun-soaked awning of the crazy little *Cristóbal Colón*, first gazed at Los Cerditos, his heart misgave him. Los Cerditos, on the Rio Pútrido in the República de Chivo, did not appreciably resemble its portrait in the Citrus Fruit Sales Company's prospectus.

All Bennington could see, strung along the mud-and-mangrove bank of the Rio, was a weary aggregation of dubious 'dobbies, prone peons, mangy mongrels, grave goats and blasé buzzards badly in need of chloride of lime, the ensemble simmering in a haze of heat and *hayhennies*.* *Hayhennies* are those microscopical, tropical flies that set up their derricks and drill for oil on any exposed portion of the anatomy, preferably the shining dome.

As the steamer warped up to the slimy bank and the plank was shoved ashore by

*Purists and sticklers may insist on the Spanish spelling of this pretty pet, viz: *jejenes*—but no Americano who has been down that way will ever call them anything but *hayhennies*.

ebon arms, a suspicion crossed Bennington's mind that perhaps Mrs. Bennington had, after all, been right—that possibly he ought *not* to have purchased a fruit-*finca* in Los Cerditos without first having given it the once-over; that conceivably the prospectus, showing a rose-embowered villa, with a magnificent avenue of royal palms and surrounded by vast groves of orange and lemon trees, might have exaggerated a trifle. Bennington swabbed eight thousand hayhennies off his perspiring brow, and went ashore.

Los Cerditos revealed itself as a muddy smear of *mañana*, with a jail, a rurales' barracks and an Ayuntamiento or town hall grouped round a plaza that seemed to have gone out of the plaza-ing business quite a while ago. Los Cerditos needed an undertaker. Inquiry developed a *posada*, or inn, coyly tucked in among some shacks that stood up by leaning against each other. This inn was run—no, walked—by a Swede who, some claimed, had had a bath and a shave twenty-one years ago. Others said twenty-two.

BENNINGTON had his steamer-trunk transferred to the posada by a brace of maroon mariners, and felt more marooned than they. His first look-in at Los Cerditos posada was not jovial. Live-stock from the patio seemed too intimate with his cell; the torn netting over the little iron rack-of-torture that the Swede called a bed looked as if would strain out only the largest of the mosquitoes; certain red blotches on the leprous, whitewashed walls bore witness to midnight entomological massacres.

Despite all, however, Bennington bucked up. No matter about the town. The fruit-*finca*—Finca Rica, its name was—ah, that would be different! Didn't the prospectus prove it? Bennington unpacked, dolled himself in white ducks and pith helmet, and felt better. He had been a tame office-squirrel long enough, running round and round in a revolving cage. Now he was going in for the landed-proprietor stuff, citrus fruits, peon servants, hammocks in the shade of palms, with the Miskus in a rocking-chair on a broad piazza under the roses. Oh, boy, that would be the life! (Any tropic prospectus will prove it!)

"When I get the *finca* all jazzed up, right," said Bennington, "I'll send for Beatrice, and she'll have to admit I was right!"

Bennington gazed out over the patio at the shimmering plain, the range of the Sierra Hedionda, the buzzards volplaning far aloft. He felt all manner of exotic things. One just bit him under the shirt.

His enthusiasm dropped into an air-pocket, at dinner, and fell from five thousand meters altitude to three hundred and fifty meters. Over the rice, fish and malangas—there was no meat, milk or butter—in the *comedor* of the inn, where the flies were holding a caucus, he heard two Englishmen at the next table discussing the República de Chivo.

"Bally hole!" ejaculated one. "Why, you cawn't even get a title to a piece of land. Long lease—that's the best you can do."

"And even that holds good only as long as you pay your blinkin' taxes," put in the other. "If you don't, they jolly well confiscate you."

"It took me three y'ars to get even my lease, on my *finca* down Suciedad way. I had to grease everybody, from the alcalde up to the dog-poisoner."

"No wonder these blighters have a proverb that the imports of the country are investors and bottled beer, and the exports are broke investors and empty bottles!"

"You simply cawn't get anythin' done, here. You *cawn't* hurry these blighters!"

"Nothing hurries, in Chivo. Even the lightning gets tired and quits before it hits the ground. There was a bolt of it got stuck that way, lawst week, on Armstrong's Lago Viscoso *finca*. Stuck, sir, twenty feet above his house. Armstrong had to make an *hombre* go up on the blinkin' roof and lasso it. Burned up seven ropes before they got it down. Oh, a bally hole!"

BENNINGTON wiped sweat and flies from his worried brow and departed in quest of the agent for the property, one Smeady by name. Him he discovered, red, unshaven, innocent of soap, in a gaping undershirt and a haze of cigarette-smoke, making out freight-receipts in what the sign on the door said was an office. He exhaled a rummy aroma, and had bleary eyes.

"Things *is* a bit depressed, just now," admitted Smeady, "but they'll do better, soon. The cyclone set us back some."

"Cyclone? What cyclone?"

"The big blow of last September. Aint you heard?"

"Heard nothing!"

"Oh, that was before you purchased." And Smeady fell to picking his teeth with a still-inky pen, which did not perceptibly blacken them.

"It didn't—hm—affect my estate, did it?"

"No-o-o-o. But o' course, there's that suit pendin'."

"Suit?"

"For damages to the Campos Secos, ad-joinin' Jaffray's *finca*. Old man Jaffray claims his *boniatos* are growin' in your cellar."

"In my cellar?"

"Well, that is, your house bein' moved over on his land, you see, an' some of his crops comin' up under it, that sort of makes 'em in your cellar. He's entered suit, at the Ayuntamiento, to make you move your house back, or else buy what land of his it's onto."

"My house on another man's land!" gulped Bennington, aghast.

"All but one corner. When the water went down, that's where it dropped her."

"Water? What water?"

"Oh, aint you heard? No, prob'ly not. Well, you see, that there cyclone jest natchally blowed the Caribbean right up the Rio, here, an' flooded the town. But things is lookin' up again. Several owners has begun replantin' already."

"Replanting? What?"

"Oh, all citrus fruits, an' pineapples. It was salt water, you see. You can't expect citrus fruit-trees to live, after they been under salt water. But besides them an' the pines, it didn't kill nothin' much, except the banana-palms an' the avocado-pears an' the guavas an' the sapodillos an' the—"

"Oh, is that all?" interrupted Bennington with fine sarcasm. He scratched himself and demanded: "Anything left alive—except bugs?"

"Well, yes," answered Smeady with weariness. He looked a hookworm's picnic-ground. "There's a few coconuts left. They're quite hardy, you know."

"Yes, like *finca* salesmen!"

"Huh?"

"Oh, nothing. Much obliged. I'll just take a walk down to my—er—my place, and look it over. That is, if it hasn't floated away, or anything."

"No, it's still there." Smeady turned a vague thumb in a southerly direction. "You go down Calle Fango past the slaughter-house. Don't bother the buzzards there. There's a heavy fine for botherin' buzzards. They're part o' the police. Then you keep out in the country, a piece, by the pest-house an' the graveyard—"

"Cheerful locality, eh?"

"Yes, kind of. An' then you pass the execution-ground where they garrote people, or shoot 'em if they've got pull enough to dodge the twister. Then you reach Jaffray's place, next to yourn. Jaffray's fences is bad. Look out for his bull. That's some bull he's got."

"I should worry about Jaffray's bull, after a *finca*-salesman's!"

"Huh?"

"Oh, nothing. Good day." And Bennington started for the door.

"Hey, wait a minutel!"

"Well, what now? I haven't been indicted for high treason, arson, murder or anything, have I?"

"No—not yet. But there's them back taxes."

"Back taxes?"

"Yes, since 1907. Them has got to be made up before you can get your deed."

REDDENING ominously, Bennington returned.

"You mean to tell me—"

"Yes. But it aint over about two hundred pesos. Sorry if the Citrus Sales Company didn't tell you, but I can show you the papers. An' there's that insurance, too."

"What insurance?"

"On the house."

"Oh, to Halifax with that! I don't want any insurance—wont pay it!"

"It's the law, here. The Ayuntamiento makes you take it, and if you don't pay, they charge it on the tax-bill. That'll come to—"

"What else?"

"Well, nothing, but a hundred for phosphate, sixty for plowing and mulching, and whatever the goat-bill comes to."

"For cheese' sake. Goat-bill? What goat-bill?"

"Well, last year, you see, a goat got onto your land and ate something that killed it."

"Thank God, that's one less! Must have eaten some of the Citrus Sales Company's literature!"

"Huh?"

"Oh, nothing! Proceed!"

"They found it dead, there. So you were sued for damages, with arrears and int'rest."

"Oh, I was, was I?"

"Yes. It went by default. I don't just remember the amount due. Int'rest keeps makin' it a little more all the time, you see. An' then there's the int'rest on the back taxes an' insurance, too."

"So? Well, about this goat, now, I wont pay it!"

"Yes," said Smeady, an anxious look in his eyes, which were both rheumy and rummy. "Yes, but this here goat belonged to Pablo Sanchez."

"I don't care if it belonged to all infernal!"

"But *hombre*, this here Sanchez is one o' the *rurales*, here. He keeps his own private cemetery. He's mighty proud of seein' it grow. Last year a Tignosos man grabbed one of Sanchez's goats that was eatin' the wire off his fence, an' said he'd butcher it if Sanchez didn't pay damages. Sanchez waited till he had business down that way, and then shot him through the head."

"That didn't hurt the Tignosos man, did it?"

"No, but it kind of damaged a nearly

new sombrero he was wearing. *I* wouldn't dare go up against this Sanchez!"

"You've got nothing to fear. No bullet would ever go through *your* bean! You can just tell this Sanchez, with my compliments—"

"Well, suit yourself, *hombre*. But he told your tenant, the other day—"

"Whose tenant?"

"Yours. Why?"

"My tenant?" demanded Bennington, staring. "But *I've* got no tenant on my *finca!*"

"Oh, sure you have! Didn't they tell you? Well, no matter. It's all right, anyhow."

"Oh, it is, eh? Well, say—"

"You see, I didn't want to let the place stand idle, as the insurance is higher, that way, and also as the house is mostly on Jaffray's *finca*, and if there was no one living in it, to protect it—'cause there's a law you can't move a house with a live tenant in it an' it wouldn't do to kill this one—why, Jaffray might pull the house all the way over on his land, or shove his land under the corner that's still on yours, and then he'd own the house."

"Oh, he would, would he?"

"Huh? Oh, yes, yes. That's law, in Chivo. Houses left layin' round on other people's propitty more than thirty days belongs to 'em. Folks are so kind of careless, like, about their houses, down here, you've got to have a law like that to keep the place from gettin' all cluttered up. So I figger this here tenant of yours is a good investment, Mr. Bennington. You see, she—"

"Oh, it's a she, is it?"

"Yep. A widow. Says she's a widow, anyhow. Search *me!*"

"If I did, I know what I'd find, same as on me," said Bennington, scratching again.

"She's got no husband, anyhow," continued Smeady, unmoved. "So that prob'ly makes her a widow. She's an all-right party, even if she *is* a little back on her rent, that's four pesos a month."

"Back on her rent, is she? How far back?"

"From now, continuous. Back to when she moved in. That's seven months ago, the third of last August."

"Great business! Why the devil don't you get a tenant that'll at least pay enough to keep up the taxes and insurance and goat-bills?"

SMEADY went after a little of yesterday's lunch, with his pen, before answering.

"Well, I would, only I can't get this here one out."

"Why not?"

"She's sick, every time I try. And there's a law, down here, you can't turn a sick tenant out in the street."

"How can you, where there are no streets?" queried Bennington.

"Huh?"

"Oh, nothing. She's sick, is she? What's the matter with her?"

"I dunno! Just sick, that's all."

"I'll make her a darn sight sicker, by ginger!"

"Wait a minute, *hombre!*"

"You go where my mother-in-law said she hoped I would!" snarled Bennington. Out into the blinding glare and heat of the dog-and-buzzard-infested pueblo he sallied. Toward Finca Rica he directed his purposeful footsteps.

And Fate, walking beside him, laughed up its rune-embroidered sleeve.

THE widow gave Bennington a severe shock. In fact, she overshadowed everything else, and for the moment made him quite forget everything. Bennington was a very respectable married man; but a Spanish widow may be, and often is, the grandest little memory-eraser known to *genus homo*. It was a blessing to Bennington that something could make him forget, if only temporarily, the short-arm jolt handed out to him by his first sight of Finca Rica.

Bennington reached the *finca* after a blistering walk past all the attractions mentioned by Smeady, and then some, including a hut where he inquired the way. Inside the hut a citizen was dining, with wife and offspring. Two chickens, on the table, likewise dined. One dog, lying on the earthen floor, likewise dined on bones flung down. One chick, standing on said dog, likewise dined, entomologically. There were pigs, too. Bennington hastened on.

Without the widow to overcome the effect of Finca Rica, the blow—after that lathering, blistering walk—would have put Bennington to the mat.

Item: One sketchily fenced area of what looked like a bit of Death Valley, with no more of a growth of guinea-grass than any good safety-razor could have got away with.

Item: The stumps of many ex-fruit-trees. Nothing alive but two coco-palms afflicted with sleeping-sickness and one lemon-tree groaning under the weight of three lemons.

Item: A fleet of internal-combustion-engined goats gnawing at whatever buds still labored to spring up round the roots of the trees.

Item: One burro, considerably extinct, with a buzzards' convention in plenary session.

Item: One pig-pen, with the balmy trade-wind in the wrong direction.

Item: At the far end of the estates, one mangrove swamp, with a glimpse of scum marking the course of the Rio Pútrido.

Item: Under one of the palms, a distorted shack set down carelessly, as it were, with only one corner on Finca Rica.

That's all.

If it hadn't been for the widow, Bennington would have poured dust on his head, and without any undue commotion would have curled himself neatly in a fence-corner and rendered up the ghost.

Not so, however. And it was the widow who made all the difference.

The widow (in parenthesis be it whispered) would have run the thermometer up on a far less impressionable *hombre* than Bartholomew Bennington. Dearly as he loved his Beatrice, wife of his 34-inch bosom, it profoundly disconcerted him to discover himself the landlord of a real, live, very young, near-Spanish widow.

To be the landlord of any widow whatsoever is liable to disturb a nervous man. How much more so, when that widow turns out to be like the one now looming up over the horizon of Bennington's apperception?

Hardly had Bennington, dejectedly enough, trekked on to his property,—rather, the property that might be his,—when a figure appeared at the door of the shack.

Bennington reached that door. He stopped, blinking.

"*Buenos días, señor!*"

A soft, kitchy-coo voice lisped it at him endearingly. He found himself looking down into a pair of large, brown, liquid, innocent Castilian eyes of incalculable seduction—eyes that gleamed with lights such as never, surely, sparkled north of the Tropic of Cancer—southern lights, if you please, far more subversive of the soul of man than any northern lights whatsoever.

Bennington felt slightly dizzy. His self-assurance and his intention of blowing-up the non-paying tenant did a nose-dive, looped the loop and flattened out hardly fifty-seven meters from the ground. Still, he kept hold of the controls, and observed the widow. The widow observed Bennington. Business of mutual observation.

"*Buenos días!*" again.

"How do?"

Then they both fell silent.

Here is what she saw: One rather prim, flustered, close-shaven Americano, slightly under medium height, with eyeglasses and an office stoop, white linen suit, pith helmet, dusty white canvas shoes—one exceedingly touristic Americano; one Americano who, by right of a somewhat tenuous purchase, held the powers of landlordship over her; one Americano whose arrival, by means best known to the Los Cerditos people, had already been for several hours known to her.

Here is what he saw: One mighty luscious little bunch of the Eternal Feminine; albeit a trifle *café-au-lait*—but *café-au-lait* with more *lait* than *café*, by a long shot. Glossy black hair, with just the suspicion of a wave, parted in the middle, decked with a magnificent, genuine, hawk's-bill comb, and drawn down over two (2) ears that—were I a poet, and very original—I might describe as delicately chiseled sea-shells. He beheld a crimson Japanese hibiscus trailing its delicate lacery down over this hair, at the right side of the shapely head. Also a very, oh, *very* low-cut little dress of simple white cotton, that (it's a cinch) had no lingerie whatever underneath it.

Bennington's eyeglassed eyes fell down along the lines of this femininity, lines that would have made Venus ill. Bennington's soul blushed, but his eyes continued to observe. He beheld slim brown ankles and bare feet tucked into a pair of the rope-soled *alparcatas* of the country. He beheld two hands, likewise slim, set on two well-ripened hips. In the fingers of the right hand smoldered a brown-paper cigarette. Oh, boy!

He beheld, now, a white-toothed smile, trimmed with lips that you can fit adjectives to by looking in Roget's "Thesaurus," §829 (edition of 1857), where it gives synonyms for *delicious*. The smile was also of the eyes. (Also see Roget.) Then the right hand rose to the full, ripe, red, moist lips, the cigarette was set between

them; the widow took a deep chestful of smoke and let it drift from those lips, as per above, all round Bennington's dizzy head. The smoke enveloped him like Circean censers on the Isle of What's-Its-Name, when Ulysses and his men had the Big Picnic. You know—it tells all about that in Bullfinch.

There was mockery, insinuation, invitation, coquetry, defiance, seduction and femininity-plus in that inimitable tilt of the head, that angle of the cigarette, the slow drift of that smoke on the gentle tropic breeze wafting from the hog-pen. There was witchery in it, magic, yea, that eclipsed the lopsided dislocation of the shack, the extinct burro and its undertaking corps down yonder, the pigs. Bennington could not swim, but his head could, and did. He lifted his pith helmet, no doubt to let the perfumed breezes waft against his superheated brain-box, and cleared his throat.

"Are you the widow who don't pay—hm!—nice day, isn't it? How d'ye do?"

"No very good," the widow answered brokenly, looking suddenly wistful. "No espeak mucho Inglés, señor. Me seek!"

"Sick, eh? That's too bad!" commiserated Bennington, sparring for wind—going into a clinch, as it were. (Figurative use of words.) "What seems to be the matter?"

"You Señor Bennin'ton?" the widow cooed, her eyes languishing. "Sí?"

"Sí, señora," Bennington admitted. He pronounced it "Say-nora." Somehow he felt he was about to be put on the witness-stand.

"Ah!" she sighed. "So seek!" She pressed a hand to her full-rounded, uncorseted bosom, and rolled up the dark eyes. "Oh, w'at pain! So seek, me!"

"Sorry," said Bennington, getting his second wind, "but I own this house." He spoke sternly. "I'm going to move this house back on my land, *sabe?* House, move 'em, there—*all!*" He pointed toward what had evidently been foundations. With the idea, hope revived. Perhaps, after all, the house could be moved, the trees replanted, something made out of this ghastly mockery of the prospectus—some way found to avoid telling Beatrice he had been stung again. "Me, move my house, *sabe?* Fix 'em up. Make 'em all good, you know. Then rent 'em! *Alquilar!*"

"To me, *no?*" the widow smiled, charmingly. She laid a slim hand on his white duck sleeve. "You good *hombre*, feex my

leettle house for me. Veree good *hombre!* *Muchas gracias!* You rent it to me, *no?*"

"If you pay, say-nora!" Bennington got quite imposing. "Mr. Smeady tells me you haven't paid anything at all, yet. *No dinero!*"

"Oh, señor! Me, seek widow; no have *hombre!*"

"Sorry, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Hernandez. That me. You have match, eh? My cigarrillo, he go out."

Bennington fished, found a match, struck it. The widow leaned against him, her hand on his as she lighted up. Bennington was perspiring more freely than even the thermometer could justify. He glanced about, thankful that the hot red road was deserted and that no other house, no other human, was in sight.

He threw away the match, gently repulsed the widow, and looked sternly at her through his tortoise-rimmed glasses.

"Sorry, say-nora," he repeated. "but you see, *naturalmente*, you no pay, you no can live in my house, *sabe?*"

"Pay? Me, pay? But señor, me, widow, no money, how can pay? How can work, w'en seek all the time? So seek?"

"Pardon me, say-nora, but you don't look very sick. Not very!"

"Ah, no look, maybe. But w'at pains! Oh, terrible! Some days I faint myself—here the pain, there the pain!" She touched her head, her throat, and blew nonchalant smoke on the balmy, sweet air. "If I no smoke, señor, to take away pain, I maybe faint myself any time!"

"Don't—don't faint now, please, say-nora!" exclaimed Bennington in great alarm.

"I faint myself, if I get excite! An' oh, señor, how I loove *los Americanos!* So handsome, brave, strong!" Her eyes melted at him. "How I get excite, when Americano come near! I maybe faint myself, maybe die!"

"For heaven's sake, say-nora! Calm yourself!"

"It is terrible, señor!" Her look yearned. "So lonesome, me. *Tan solitaria, ay de mí!* No man! An' my leettle ones! How I go away from my leettle home, with my leettle ones?"

"Little what?"

"My leettle babies, señor! No house, no home. How? *Dios mío!*"

"Ah, say-nora, so you have children, eh?" Bennington suddenly felt a sense of guilt.

The widow turned, called:

"Ven aca, chico! Ven, chiquita mia!"

Bennington, looking past her, saw the interior of his house—his tropic bungalow, rose-embowered, into which he never yet had stepped foot and into which he certainly would never dare step foot so long as this Spanish Circe remained there. The house, he observed, was reasonably clean—far cleaner than most, in Los Cerditos. It was simply furnished, homelike. There was the usual charcoal-burner, the blue-painted little carbide-lamp hung against the whitewashed wall, the *porrón* or water-cooler of porous ware hung to a beam by a braided goat-hide thong.

Before he could notice anything more, *pat-pat-pat* came naked feet toddling, and two offspring heaved in sight. The boy was perhaps four, the girl three. They were both dressed exactly alike, Eden summer style. Summer—that's before-the-fall—get it? (Pretty good, I'll say.) One was lemon yellow—more lemon! The other was chocolate. Both sucked thumbs, directing round, expressionless eyes at Bennington.

"Both yours?" inquired B., wondering at the chromatic variation, but feeling that any personal inquiries might be indelicate.

"Sí, sí, señor! Both mine! Beautiful, pretty, bonito, sweet, mono, magneefico, no?"

"No is right, say-nora."

"Ah, que simpático!"

"Some family, say-nora!"

"I have another one, too, not here."

"So? Congratulations!"

"Gracias!" She smiled bewitchingly, shooting the vamp stuff right over the foot-lights in Bara style. The children couldn't have been barer, possibly, and the widow was next door to it.

"Señor," vamped the widow, "you beeg, strong, reech, handsome Americano, you no put poor seeck leetle Espanish widow an' *niñitos* out of house, because no have *dinero*?"

Bennington gasped. He drew a cigar from his pocket and lighted it, for self-assurance. The widow cast longing eyes thereon.

"Good tobacco," she smiled. "You have two, no?"

Bennington stood and delivered. The widow flipped her cigarette away and bit the end off the cigar with perfectly pearly, even, strong teeth. For a minute their eyes met. Overhead the breeze rustled the dry leaves of the coco-palm. A thin drift

of smoke from burning guinea-grass, somewhere out on the plain, crossed the sky. The slow-wheeling shadow of a buzzard, far aloft, bisected the estate—the estate where now one lemon-tree alone was bearing fruit. A goat blatted; a hog became vocal; it was all exotic, plus. Bennington's pulses stirred. Here was adventure; here was life. He felt himself slipping; the Wheeler Avenue Church, in which he was a junior deacon, seemed (and was) more than two thousand miles away; so was Mrs. B. Bennington blushed. The words of Emerson came to him: "High living and low thinking." After all, when one is in Rome, one should roam. Bennington lifted his hand, to lay it on the widow's arm—but the hand only sought his watch-pocket.

He hauled out his watch, glanced at it, said:

"Well, say-nora, I—I guess I've got to be getting back to town. Hope you'll—be better, soon."

"No, never better, me." She smiled sadly. "My heart, so sad, so lonely! No *hombre!*"

"Oh, no *hombre*, eh?" asked Bennington, trying to be matter-of-fact. "What happened to your *hombre*?"

"He get keel by Chivistas, in last revolution. Now we suffer. Oh, Señor Bennin'ton, you cannot see my babies hungry, no clothes? You geeve me one, two pesos, eh? No?"

"No is right, again, say-nora." The naked eye did not detect that the pot-bellied babies were oppressed by famine. Nor did the widow appear at all haggard. In fact, she had altogether too much feminine pulchritude for B.'s peace of mind. Now she was smiling up at him, with the crimson hibiscus tilted over on one side. Bennington tried to back away. But she detained him with the slim hand on his arm.

"Give to me one light, señor?" begged she.

"Here's a match," he answered.

"No like match! I light my cigar with yours, eh?"

A-tiptoe in the rope-soled *alpargatas*, she raised her cigar—and mouth—to his. Bennington stood pat. By the gods, not now would he hoist the white flag! She pressed a little closer. Her hand, her arm slid to his shoulder as she steadied herself. Her eyes half closed; the hibiscus almost tickled Bennington's left ear.

For the first time in all his white-col-

lared, 34-inch chested, junior-deaconed, much-married life, Bartholomew Bennington realized that—

"Lord!" thought he. "I'd better be going!"

The widow, her cigar alight, sank back and away, contented. She was surely getting on quite well.

"You stay here, have some *café* with me, señor?" invited she. The infants had silently departed. "Me, no *dinero*. Very poor, an' seeck. But I am of Spanish blood!" Her dark, lustrous eyes gleamed with sudden pride of a race dominant across the pages of time, of history. "The Americano is welcome! My house shall be to heem like hees own house! *Pase usted!*"

"Thanks, no," declined B. "It's awfully good of you, say-nora, to tell me this house is like my own, and all that, but really I've got to be getting back to Los Cerditos. I—I'll see you later, say-nora."

"No call me señora!" she flashed at him with a wonderful, arch look. "Call me Angelita—your leetle Angelita!"

"Oh, no, no, really, I couldn't think of that, say-nora!" objected Bennington hastily. He realized he was being vamped, and vamped hard. This was the nearest he had ever come to being vamped; all his previous experience had been at the movies. He knew he liked it, but it was naughty, naughty—mustn't touch! So he backed away, one hand raised, palm-out. "See you later. Good day!"

"*Váyase con Dios, amigo mío!*" she gave him affectionate adieu. "You will come again, very soon? *Pronto, no?*"

"Well—yes, yes, of course!"

"*Oh, felicidad!*" she breathed. Then to the babes and sucklings, in Spanish:

"Say good-by to the handsome, brave Americano!"

"*Adiós!*" obeyed the urchin, unmoved, like some chubby, mechanical toy.

"*Adiós, papá!*" lisped the girl, and smiled bewitchingly.

The widow blew a ribbon of smoke from those red lips into the sunlit air under the palm-tree, kissed her slim hand at Bennington, and laid that hand on her heart.

"Good night!" ulped Bennington, and fled.

BENNINGTON spent three weeks of toils and complications incredible to one who knoweth not the ways and customs of folk in the spig belt. He wrote, however, enthusiastic letters home to Bea-

trice, all about the land flowing with milk and honey. In case something might yet be salvaged from the wreck, he might never have to own the awful truth. In case all were lost, he was at any rate delaying the day of reckoning when Beatrice, as in times of yore when he had bought that shower-bath, could point the finger of contumely with an "I told you so!"

Yes, Bennington had troubles. This is not a book I am writing, and so I shall only catalogue those troubles, not describe them. There were troubles at the *posada*, *re* nothing much to eat and *re* the room being an entomological museum; there was prickly heat and there were continuous hot and cold hayhennies; there was trouble about the H. C. L. and not any decent L. to have H. C. about; there was trouble with the Ayuntamiento anent the deeds, taxes, goat-damages and insurance; there was trouble with the notary about drawing and stamping infinitudes of papers, none of which ever got finished, signed, sealed and delivered; there was trouble *re*:

Interpreters; all kinds of brown and maroon people all the time showing up with bills for alleged plowing, mulching, setting out trees, furnishing phosphate, none of which was now visible.

Jaffray, who insisted the house should be moved.

The *alcalde*, who wouldn't permit it, while a sick tenant dwelt therein.

The bank, that wouldn't cash U. S. checks.

The cable-company, that wouldn't take messages collect.

The *rurales*, that pastured their goats and cows on the *finca* and then kicked because there wasn't feed enough for them.

The *Sanidad*, that objected to the location of the piggery.

The consul, that had a bill against the property for transferring something or other, once upon a time.

The goats, attacking the lemon-tree.

The dogs, reported to be attacking the goats, it being a penal offense for anyone's dog to bite anyone's goat on your land.

The *mañana* habit, that kept anything from getting done.

The climate, water, buzzards, laws, customs, manners, habits, rules, regulations, army, navy, judicature and constitution of the República de Chivo.

Bennington grew groggy. Life was now spelled *T-r-o-u-b-l-e*. Capital *T*, please. Bennington didn't quite know what was

happening, or why, because the heat had got into his brains and turned them to whipped cream; also he was getting thin from living on malangas, rice and fish; also he was pale where he wasn't sun-blistered and prickly-heated and hayhen-nied. He thought the universe had gone wrong and the terrestrial axis had got unhooked from the pole-star, whereas all the matter really was this, that he was trying for the first time to do business with people between the latitude of Cancer, which means *the Crab*, and Capricorn, which means *the Goat*.

Bennington, when a tame squirrel in his spinning-cage of business, had made enormous progress compared to Bennington, a waltzing mouse in the glass case of tropic life. He waltzed and waltzed, and got nowhere. All he understood was that nothing ever really happened, in spite of the fact that he was continually busier than a one-armed painter with the hives.

In despair Bennington appealed to the nonchalant, tooth-picking rum-hound Smeady.

"My Lord, man, what am I going to do?" demanded he, at the last gasp of patience. "Here I've been sticking around this back-alley of misery for three double-blanked weeks, and nothing done—"

"I've been here ten years, an' nothin' done!"

"No deed, no moving, no trees, no rent, no repairs, no nothing but taxes and stamps and insurance and laws and being batted round from one mongrel official to another, and lawsuits and bugs and starvation and bills and interpreters and widows and lemons—"

"Keep your B. V. D.'s on," advised Smeady. "You aint no worse off than all Americanos down here. That's the way these Chivos do biz. There's sixty-five clerks on every one-man job, an' they've all got the mañana fever an' the itchin' palm. You're goin' as good as any Americano. You'll git results in another six months or so."

"Six months! By ginger! Say, I—I'm through with this mañana stuff! I'm going to get action, now, or bust!"

"You'll bust, Mister."

"Bust, nothing! Something's got to be done, damn quick!"

"Damn quick has put lots of hombres in the cemetery, here."

"I should worry about the cemetery! I'm going to get something done!"

"Look out it aint yourself."

"I'm going to begin on that widow!"

"Huh?"

"She's the stumbling-block to the whole proposition. Isn't there any way to get her out, so I can move that house?"

Smeady shook his uncombed head and scratched his unshaven chin with unmanicured nails.

"Not legally," he answered. "But you might try moral persuasion."

"As how?"

"Oh, a coupla print dresses an' about five pesos."

"What? You mean, after she's had all that rent for nothing, I've got to bribe her to get out of my own property?"

"Yes, somethin' like that."

"It's an outrage!"

"It may be an outrage, Mister, but it's practical Chivo politics. It's your one chancet. If you don't work it some such way, she can squat there till Los Cerditos freezes over, which will be the Saturday P. M. after hell does. And she can tell you to wait for that frost, too."

"I wont do it! I wont be held up that way!"

"All right, *hombre*. Good day," remarked Smeady; and once more he bent over his task of making out freight-receipts.

BENNINGTON thought it over, twenty-four busy, scratchy hours, and knew himself beaten. He saw he hadn't even a Chinaman's chance to get the place free from trouble and wish it on some other citrus-maddened sucker till that widow was out of the way and the house moved off Jaffray's *malangas*. He purchased, therefore, two simple gowns—a plain red one and a yellow, with green stripes—at the best *tienda* in Cerditos, and with these gowns and some cash once more repaired to his place. It was a "place," now—no longer a *finca* or an estate.

The lovely Angelita greeted him with smiles. Today her lustrous hair was hanging in thick black masses down her sinuous back. The flower in her tresses was a jasmine. Her raiment was a *camisa* above, a petticoat below, and a cigar. No babes were visible. Bennington kept his mind firmly fixed on Mrs. B. and the Wheeler Avenue Church, and remained discreetly about two yards from the door of the palm-shaded shack.

Bennington made a little talk—videlicet:

The Americano heart was sad because of the widow's misfortunes. The Americano would assist the suffering widow. Accept, then, these two simple gowns, also these five pesos. And when would it be convenient for the widow to seek another lodgment?

Angelita smiled sweetly, blew smoke round B.'s ears, came close, laid the slim hand on his lapel and with childish ingenuously looked up into his horn-spectacled eyes.

"I weel go, Mr. Bennin'ton, since you weesh it," she lisped. "I weel do anythin' in this worl' for my dear Mr. Bennin'ton. I am only one esmall, leetle widow. Hé ees one beeg, estrong, brave man. I weel obey heem. But—it cost me more than five pesos to move away forever from my leetle home!"

"So?" demanded Bennington. The lure of the brown eyes, the slim hand, was not very strong on him now. Prickly heat and hayhennies, hunger and complications had got him peeved; he didn't feel quite so romantic. The jasmine in the glossy black hair no longer vamped him; the cigar-smoke no longer cast as it were a haze over his eyes, his memories, his conscience, dimming Beatrice and his deaconship. Even as, at the time of the shower-bath episode, Bennington had resolved to master fate or die right there in the tub, so now he made up his mind for victory or annihilation.

"How much do you want?" he demanded brusquely.

"Oh, señor! You espik so to *me*? To your leetle Angelita? Well" (deep sigh), "it cost me fifteen pesos, at least."

"Ten, and the dresses, to beat it!"

"*Ay de mí!* My leetle home! My babies, an' no place to esleep! An' me so seeck! But—I go for twelve pesos, fifty centavos!"

"I said ten bucks, and ten goes! Take it or leave it!"

"Well, I take it. Geeve me *el dinero!*" The slim hand went out. "I go then—*mañana.*"

"You go today! Now!"

She looked appealing.

"Today, I go?"

"I'll say you do!"

"Well, then geeve me five pesos now. When I gone, other five!"

"That's fair, I suppose," admitted Bennington. He handed over a V. The widow tucked it down into her bosom.

"I go," said she. "But my heart—he is broke!"

SHE leaned on Bennington and wept. Bennington, ardently thankful for the two thousand miles between him and Beatrice, broke loose and fled, leaving the widow in possession of five pesos, two dresses and a house.

She would, however, undoubtedly clear out. The lure of the other five would dislodge her. Then matters would progress. In spite of prickly heat, hayhennies and all complications, Bennington returned to Los Cerditos eminently happy.

That happiness lasted only a brief space. Night came, and with it news that the widow had not yet moved. Bennington learned this from a rancher who came riding in from down San Sudio way. Bennington tried to locate Smeady, for advice, but Smeady was not discoverable. He therefore passed an unusually peeved evening in the *posada* bar, his heart filled with un-Lincolnian "malice toward all and charity toward none"—least of all toward café-au-lait widows with hibiscuses and jasmynes in their hair.

Bennington retired early to theoretical rest under the ragged mosquito-bar in his white-walled cell off the patio. He was poison-mad. His sleep was a nightmare of heat, bugs, peevishness.

All at once, out of the black of the tropic, stewing night, a rough hand seized him. A rummy voice growled at him.

Bennington sat up suddenly, dazed.

"What the—"

A vague dark figure was beside him, shaking him back to consciousness. Bennington shook an involuntary shimmy, and fully awoke.

"S-H-H-H!" cautioned the dark figure.

A familiar odor of more than 2.75% and a certain hoarse quality of the dark figure's voice assured Bennington that this was no disembodied spirit, but a spiritized body of only too well-known name and habits.

"What the devil d'*you* want, now?" demanded Bennington irately. "What you doing here?"

"Sh-h-h-h!" warned Smeady again.

"He's after you!"

"Who is?"

"Get on your things and beat it!" whispered Smeady. "You got about five minutes. After that—"

"W-w-w-what?"

"If you're here when he eventuates, your life won't be worth a plugged counterfeit Chivo centavo!"

"You crazy, or what?"

"No, I aint crazy, but you'll be dead, if you're here ten minutes from now! Sanchez, the *rural*—he's wise to you. He's full o' vino an' mescal, an' the jealousy-bug has bitten him in nine thousand places. I got a tip from down the line. Well, do you get up an' vamoose, or do you treat Los Cerditos to a first-class Americano funeral?"

Bennington climbed out onto the dirty, tiled floor, regardless of the possibility of scorpions that so dearly love to lurk in unexpected places and caress bare tootsies.

"Who's he jealous of, and why?" demanded he. "Is this a joke?"

"You'll think it's a joke when Sanchez arrives with a cannon in one mitt an' some *mucho* knife in the other, an' begins to climb up an' down your quiverin' carcass. It's that widow, you—"

"You told me to do it!"

"I didn't tell you to shoot the love-stuff at her!"

"I never!"

"Well, maybe you didn't; but Sanchez thinks you did, an' it'll be all the same to your corpse! Get a *pronto* move on, you paralytic snail! Jump into some rags, grab what you can, an' flit! Doggone it, how did I know she was Sanchez's private property? You've got one chance in eighty-seven thousand! Next minute, it'll be one in eighty-eight thousand! For the love o' Pete, *hombre*, *pronto* on the fade-away!"

Smeady shook him again, so that Bennington's teeth did a bolero with castanet accompaniment. Yes, it must have been the shake that caused the chatter. Surely, who could have suspected that Bennington would be afraid? Even if he were, it must have been fear of hurting Sanchez that made Bennington's fingers tremble so that he could hardly fasten his buttons or tie his shoes. Howbeit, he dressed in record time. No commuter ever did better. This too was commuting—probably commuting a sentence of death to one of banishment.

SMEADY, meantime—still making no light—was dumping everything movable into B.'s steamer-trunk, hit or miss. Just as Bennington finished dressing, he

shut the lid, jumped on it and cinched up the strap.

"For Gawd's sake, grab the other end, *hombre*," he whispered, "and vamoose!"

Silently they rustled the trunk out into the patio, under the vague light of the smoke-hazed tropic stars. Smeady veered toward the side gate. They stumbled down a walk bordered with beer-bottles driven into the earth, upside-down, passed through a 'dobe wall and reached a crooked little alley that led toward the river. A bat staggered dimly across the sky. Some cricket Heifetz was doing an obbligato in Q-minor. Darkness and mystery, emptiness, heat and the terror of a sudden, violent death brooded. How easy an ambushcade in the night, from behind any wall—a knife-thrust—a body slid into the river! Then the alligators would take charge of the undertaking-job. Mysterious disappearance of one Americano. No one would ever know, but Smeady—and fear would seal his lips. Bennington gulped dryly and stumbled on.

"The steamer's been gone an hour," whispered Smeady as they reached the bank of mud all sieved by innumerable little lairs of fiddler-crabs. "But I got my motorboat. We can shoot up the Rio, cut into Lago Podrido and try to get through the swamp to La Fiebre, where she ties up for wood. It's a slim chance, but there aint no other. You're lucky you got *me*, *hombre*. If you hadn't, you'd sure be pickin' lemons in hell, some *pronto*!"

Together they heaved the trunk into the launch, slipping and doing new jazz steps in the slime. Over the gunwale they scrambled. Smeady grabbed a boathook and poled off. He jerked the engine to startled life. With an intermittent bronchial spasm the exhaust began spitting at the gloom, and away upstream the launch slipped. Away forever from Bennington's existence went sliding the sad settlement of Los Cerditos.

"Now, for the love of the great, crested Philly-loo bird," complained Smeady as they echoed under the rotting bridge and came to the last huts of the town, "who'd ever thought Sanchez would of got so red-eyed over a common, everyday little thing like a landlord payin' a tenant to get out? I'm in raw. When he finds out you've blew, he'll be tryin' to dissect *me*. 'Cause he knows I'm your agent, an' he'll figger I helped you do the *pronto* sidestep. You'll

get to the States alive, maybe, but what about *me?*"

Bennington shrugged indifferent shoulders. The fate of Smeady did not alarm him.

"You ought to have told me she had a— a sweetheart, as it were," he returned bitterly. Wormwood and gall were honey, by comparison.

"How was *I* to know he'd get sore? What you done was prob'ly all open an' aboveboard. But when he dropped in an' seen them there dresses, an' handed her a few wallops, she had to up an' spill it about the ten. So now his fav'rite breakfast-food is Americano liver, soufflé. Know how to pray?"

"I'm a junior deacon!"

"Well, do some right smart deaconin', Mister. Deak away, for all you're worth. You can't deak none too much, *this* night!"

BENNINGTON refused to deak. Instead, he used some language very unusual to him. Something like a red haze seemed to pass over his eyes. The waters of a great rage flooded his tormented, flea-bitten body and exacerbated soul. With great fluency he consigned the widow, Sanchez, Los Cerditos, fruit-*fincas* and the República de Chivo to quite unthinkable torments of extremely long duration.

"I'd sell the whole qualified outfit for a *centavo*," he concluded. "I'd give it away—I'd pay any man real coin to take it!"

"I gather from your general line of verbidge," said Smeady from his place at the wheel—a dim figure, steadily holding the launch upstream between smelly banks a-sprawl with spider-clawed mangroves, "I gather an' infer, *hombre*, that you might, for a consideration, dispose of said prop-itty?"

"Take it an' be damned!" snarled Bennington, a muddy, crouching, disheveled wreck of what had once been a proud, confident prospectus-eater. "I'm done! Take it!"

"No, I couldn't do that," objected Smeady. "Gifts aint legal, in law. An' I'm honest, too, That's my main weakness, honesty. You're laborin' under excitement, an' you'd give away the Standard Oil Company just now. I wont take it as a gift. But I'll acquire an' purchase it for whatever you think it's wuth as it stands, deed, lease, lemon-tree, goats, taxes, insurance, lawsuits, hayhennies, hog-pen, extinct burro, buzzards, shacks, widow an'

all other complications included. I'll take 'em all off your hands. How much?"

"Enough to get me back to civilization, out of this superheated annex to where I hope the widow goes!"

"As per how much, cash?"

"One hundred bucks—but I warn you, *amigo*, you're committing highway robbery on yourself!"

"A hundred is right!" agreed Smeady. "If we ever get to the steamer alive, which aint by no means likely, we'll put the deal through, legal enough to hold."

Bennington, in sudden gratitude, could have wept on the rough, red neck of the rummiferous Smeady.

MUCHO time passed. The launch worked its way through dark lagoons, bubbly, scummy, overhung with gum-trees and distorted, grisly vegetation; lagoons where logs that floated in the slime suddenly came to life and grunted, snuffing, as they opened big-fanged alligator-jaws; lagoons where the mosquitoes and hayhennies came, not in thousands alone, but in dense, shrilling clouds. Bennington wondered what would happen if the engine quit, and shuddered. To him Smeady had now become the *sine qua non* of salvation and of life. It seemed a pity to take a hundred from such a brave, self-sacrificing altruist; but B. needed the coin, to get home with. Yes, he would accept the hundred.

After a few epochs, eons, and eras, the launch emerged into a dark inlet from the sea. Tiny lights winked and beckoned, far ahead. These lights turned out to be those of the *Cristóbal Colón*, taking wood at La Fiebre. Smeady brought the launch up under the port bow of the steamer and knotted the painter to the cable-chain. Then he and Bennington scrambled in at an open, black-yawning, freight-port. Smeady gave a handful of loose change to a vague figure there, for silence. Under the gleam of a lantern he scrawled a bill of sale on a wrinkled sheet of paper. Bennington signed it, and the vague figure of the roustabout witnessed the signature. Smeady counted out a hundred, which Bennington's pocket assimilated. Then they hauled B.'s trunk aboard. Smeady pressed Bennington's trembling hand.

"Lay low till you're at sea," he warned. "The *Colón* will be pullin' out o' this dump o' misery in about ten minutes. Sorry things come out so rotten for you, old

man, but this here tropic stuff is doggone uncertain. There's too many crimps in this Caribbean cosmos, to play any sure shots. You're lucky to be goin' north, with a skin that don't look like a sheet o' postage-stamps. It's me that's gotta stay here an' catch it. Here, here's a souvenir for you." He slid a shriveled lemon into Bennington's hand. "You'll prize it—it'll prove to your friends that you got *someh'n* off your *finca*, anyhow. Good luck to you. S'long!"

Bennington pocketed the lemon. He felt grateful for even that. At all events he would have something for Beatrice; he was not going home completely goose-egged. Smeady, meantime, slipped out of the freight-port into the launch, cast off and departed. The *put-put-put* of his engine faded along the black waters. Bennington, at the end of an imperfect day, was sitting alone with his thoughts. The roustabout, with glowing cigarette in the darkness of the hold, seemed to be regarding him from a distance of great commiseration.

AN hour later, with the *Colón* well out of the lagoon and safe at sea, Bennington declared himself to the purser, bought a phony passport, paid his passage, got a stateroom and stowed his trunk. Then he returned to the hold, where somehow he felt safer, to sit on a crate of empty bottles—he and the bottles being as it were the regulation exports of Chivo—and smoke a contemplative cigar, and congratulate himself on being alive as well as on having rid himself of his all-too-lively estate.

"Not so bad, at that," reflected he. "The only thing that worries me is Beatrice handing out the I-told-you-so line of talk. Well—I can fix her, some way. I can frame a good one about a revolution, an earthquake and a tornado, with smallpox on the side. I know I've dropped a couple of thousand, but she'll be so glad to get me back she wont say boo. I didn't get stung in a business way, anyhow. Fire-eating rurales aren't business. I calculate that was some smart enough deal, the way I saved a little something, anyhow, out of the wreck!"

Well pleased, he watched the phosphorescence of the dark waters, the mystic southern stars, the wink of the last tiny lighthouse on the coasts of the República de Chivo.

"How much did Smeady buy it for this time?" asked a dejected voice beside him. Bennington recognized the roustabout. "It was a hundred, wasn't it?"

"What?"

"He had to pay two, last time," remarked the roustabout, who by his speech was an Americano. "An' the time before that, one-fifty. Sometimes it's more, sometimes less. The time he put it over on me—just before I got down and out an' took this job, which I'll never get away from now,—it was one seventy-five."

"What the devil are you talking about?" demanded Bennington, feeling that all was not well. "You say he's bought that property before?"

"Why, sure—that an' others. Sometimes it's one *finca*, sometimes another. But the Finca Rica, as a steady, once-a-year, sure-shot coin-grabber, has 'em all skun. It's good biz, all right. But he'd ought of paid me more for witnessin' the bill o' sale. If he treated Angelita that way, she'd divorce him."

"Divorce him! Angelita would—"

"Sure she would!"

Bennington, grabbing the man's thin, yielding wrist, looked into vague and sad eyes of the wreck that had once been a hopeful investor.

"D'you mean to say that—that widow—is his *wife*?"

"Uh-huh! That's her. That's Mrs. Smeady. He's been married to her about six, seven year. All that talk about Sanchez—well, there aint no such animal."

"No Sanchez?"

"No. He's just part o' the line o' tough proposition Smeady uses to shake down suckers, so he can sell *fincas* back to the company to sell 'em to more suckers."

"Good *night*!"

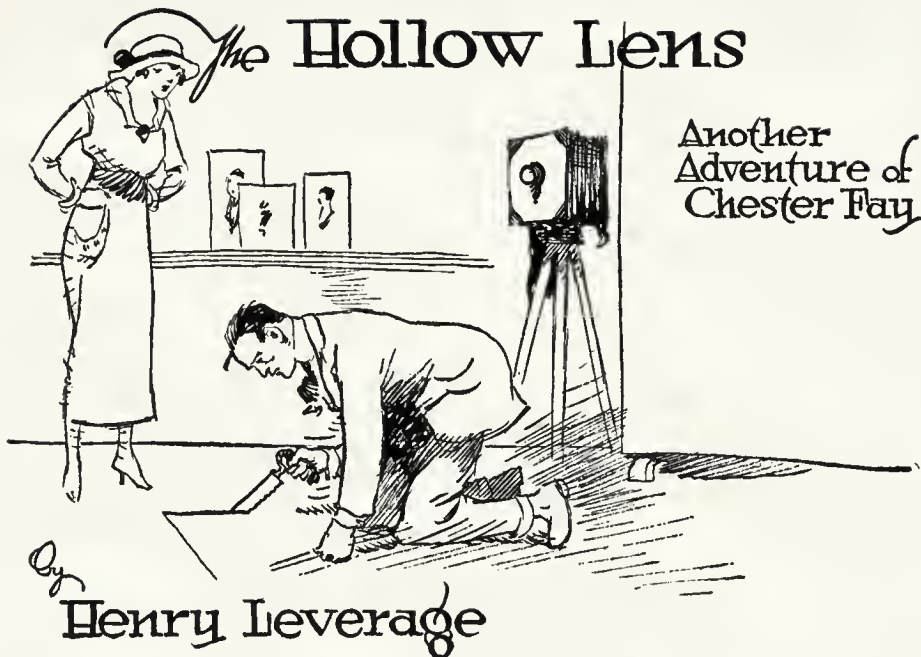
"Good night, Mister. Thanks for the *peso*."

Bennington, dazed though he was, took the hint and slid a peso into the roustabout's hand. The roustabout faded into the gloom of the hold.

One last hayhenny, still lurking in the hold, suddenly lit on Bennington's neck and sank its red-hot drill there. Bennington never even slapped at it.

"Sting away, pretty pet," said he. "I'd feel lonesome without you!"

With a bitter laugh Bartholomew Bennington realized that one is born every minute, and that for one minute, at least, he had kept the world's supply at par.



IN the *argot* of the underworld, Chester Fay, alias Edward Letchmere, an expert on other people's strong-boxes, had lammistered to Short Hills, California, where an excellent golf-links surrounds a half-hotel, half-clubhouse of the superior order.

After finishing a game, upon the twelfth day of his stay at Short Hills, Fay tossed his golf-bag to the turf, dismissed his caddy and sat down at the Nineteenth Hole, where refreshments were at that time available.

The girl who entered his life, a few minutes after he was seated, came diagonally from the clubhouse. He mentally concluded that she had been waiting on the porch for the game to finish.

She wore a picture-hat, carried a parasol and was extremely cool, as was attested by her manner as she drew a chair up to his table and said:

"I'm Charlie Laurie's only daughter."

Had the California sky fallen upon the links, Fay would not have been more surprised. Charlie Laurie was serving fifty years in the Isolation Section of Dannemora for the crime, committed against the dignity of New York State, of forcing open a national bank, seizing the contents of

the vault and escaping to Argentina, where he was later turned up by a former pal.

This man, as Fay recalled him in that long minute of his stare across the table, was bulky, rough-voiced and disfigured by a giant scar which ran from the lobe of his right ear down to, and under, his chin. The girl who now professed to be his daughter resembled him in no particular.

"Some mistake," Fay said, rising gallantly. "I'm sure that you have taken me for some one else."

The girl lifted her elbows from the table, opened her parasol, raised it and asked:

"Wont you sit down? I haven't mistaken you for some one else. You are Chester Fay, alias Edward Letchmere—an old friend of my father's."

Fay took off his plaid cap and sat down. He fingered a platinum-and-gold cigarette-case, removed a monogrammed cigarette, scratched a match on the bottom of the table and inhaled a deep breath of Turkish-scented smoke.

"By what other name was your father known?" he tested her.

"He was sometimes called 'Big Scar'!"

"Where were you born?"

"In Chi. I was with Micky Gleason's mob in

THE author of "Beyond the Wall," "Whispering Wires" and "Peterman's Luck" is at his best in this fascinating story of underworld life.

Paris. I worked deep-sea with Minnie May, 'The Duchess.' I have been trained by my father to dip, forge, stall for pennyweighting and ever so many useful things."

"You don't look it!" Fay exclaimed. "Upon my word I don't believe you're Charlie Laurie's daughter. Why, he is hardly your kind—at all."

"Laying aside compliments, Mr. Fay, and how I found where you were here in California and—so many things that take up time, I've got a proposition to make which should be mutually advantageous. In other words you are the only man in the world I would let in on a great, big job."

Fay removed his cigarette from his mouth and eyed the ashes. He ran his slender fingers through his prematurely gray hair. His face lighted with retrospection.

"Go on Miss—"

"Saidee Isaacs, they call me, although you know my name is Saidee Laurie."

"Proceed, Miss Isaacs, with your plan."

The girl's olive-shaped and tinted eyes swept the golf-links. She brushed back a lock of sherry-colored hair.

"I'm going to help you crack a safe," she informed him. "The safe—or goopher, as Father would call it—is in the brokerage office of Frank Robertson Pope, otherwise known in California get-rich-quick circles as 'The Black Cougar.'"

Fay crushed his cigarette. A film dropped over his eyes. His lips hardened to a straight line.

"Go on," he said.

"You know the man?"

"I know him!"

"He deserves no mercy?"

"None."

"He is a disgrace to all the good crooks in the world—a coward and a hypocrite. He has served time—for usury. He got out of San Quentin by squealing on his pals. He is trimming suckers right and left. He makes suicides of widows. He fills the poorhouses. He is within the law—but far guiltier than you or I."

Fay realized that he faced a very well-informed young woman. He moistened his lips and gazed over the golf-links. No one was within driving distance of the Nineteenth Hole.

"Briefly," he suggested, "you believe me to be Chester Fay, an old friend of your father's. You located this Chester Fay

through the underworld. You want him to help you turn off a trick on 'The Black Cougar.' What would there be in it for him if this trick were successfully turned?"

"One hundred thousand for him and the same for me."

"How is the goopher protected?"

"By every known electrical device. It is in the back of his office. It consists of three layers of vanadium steel and two layers of fireproofing. The circular door has two dials and a time-lock. The inner door has one dial. The day door has a flat-key lock."

"What is above the vault?"

"A photograph studio."

"What is in the basement?"

"The basement is occupied by a cigar-store. It doesn't close until twelve o'clock. There's a pool-room in the back. Sometimes men play poker there all night."

"How many watchmen in the building?"

"One, employed by 'The Black Cougar.' He can't be bought. I've tried."

"The regular thing, then—watchman, electric protection, standard vault built by Seaber, I suppose?"

"No—by Terryton!"

"A good box, but soft on top."

The girl tilted her parasol so that her face was in a shadow.

"Are you game?" she asked.

"The proposition strikes me as being peculiar. Suppose I am Chester Fay. How do I know that you are Charlie Laurie's daughter?"

"Would this convince you?" The girl reached in her breast and laid a folded photograph on the table. Fay picked it up. It was a good likeness taken in a rogues' gallery. A tag with a number was about the girl's neck. Her eyes were straight before her. Beneath the card was the notation:

"Saidee Laurie, *alias* Saidee Isaacs, *alias* English Kitty. Shoplifter, gun-moll, con-woman, gay-cat for Continental mobs of safe-blowers and card-sharpers. Sentences, suspended each instance: Auburn, N. Y., Rochester Workhouse, Rochester, N. Y., Bridewell, Chicago, Ill."

Fay turned the card over, then handed it back.

"Rather convincing," he said. "Frankly, you don't look it."

"Are you going to help me?"

Fay traced circles on the iron table-top. He stared at his golf-bag. He considered the situation from a score of angles. The

thing that swayed him and inclined him toward the proposition was the fact that "The Black Cougar" was fair game for any self-respecting crook.

"I make one stipulation," he said, finally. "Buy out the photograph gallery and establish yourself above the vault. I'll advance the money."

"I have the money. I had already figured on that," was the girl's reply.

"You seem to have thought of most things. Do you know that if that vault is taken by either an electric-arc or an oxy-acetylene blow-pipe, I will be suspected?"

"I didn't think of that."

"It is a fact! You see the police and the private agencies know a man by his work. How can we take that vault in a new way? How can I go through three layers of vanadium steel?"

"Has it ever been done?"

"Yes, by the introduction of graduated blasts of nitroglycerin."

"Father would have opened the safe that way."

"Your father was of the old school. The presence of a watchman, the poker-players in the basement, the natural suspicion which 'The Black Cougar' will have concerning his ill-gotten gains, calls for a new idea—one that will be effective and noiseless. Can you think of a way?"

"No. That's why I came to see you."

Fay crossed his legs and leaned away from the table. The girl's face was still in the shadow cast by her parasol. Again the thought came to him that the whole proposition was a trick. Perhaps she was a tool in the employ of "The Black Cougar." Perhaps the police had sent her to Short Hills in order to arrange a trap. He dismissed this thought, however. The police of Los Angeles would have been anxious to make a quick arrest. The price on his head amounted to five figures.

"I'll chance you!" he said. "The only motive I see for your actions is the one you've explained. You want to rob a robber—cheat a cheater. Frank Robertson Pope, which is only one of 'The Black Cougar's' names, has amassed too much money, in too rotten a way. I understand he has the longest and most complete sucker-list of any bucket-shop broker in this country."

"We can steal that and sell it."

"There are people who would buy it?"

"I know a very well-known firm in New

York and Washington that would pay fifty thousand dollars for the list."

"Perhaps that is all Pope has in the vault?"

The girl dropped her parasol to the turf, rose, leaned over the table and said:

"If that *were* all, would you still be game enough to try it?"

Fay stood erect. He pulled on his cap, pocketed his cigarette-case and smiled down at Saidee Isaacs.

"After thinking the matter over—I will do anything in my power to beat 'The Black Cougar.' He is within the law and you and I are outside the law. But I'll take my chances against his, on Judgment Day."

Saidee Isaacs thrust out an impulsive hand.

"I like you immensely for saying that, Chester Fay. I knew I'd like you—from what Father told me. You see I visited him when I was East, last week. He gave me directions how to find you here at Short Hills."

Fay recalled a letter which he had written to Charlie Laurie. In it had been a code telling where to send an answer. There was very little danger in doing this, for prison guards were notoriously stupid.

"That explains everything I wanted to know," he said. "You had better hurry to Los Angeles and secure that studio."

"I've already looked it over. I can buy all of the fixtures and assume the lease. I'll set up a Miss Sorjoni, Photographer of Children. You'll have until day-after-tomorrow to find out a way to cut down through the vault."

FAY watched the girl cross the lawn to the clubhouse, where she entered a taxi which was waiting under the *porte-cochère*. The taxi disappeared over the dusty surface of a winding road that led to Los Angeles, *via* Pasadena.

He wasted no time. Picking up his golf-bag, he strode lankily to the showers, bathed, took the small elevator to his room and there changed his clothes. He went to Los Angeles, by trolley. His costume was calculated to disarm any suspicion. A closely woven Panama hat shaded his features. A plaid suit and square-toed shoes gave him the appearance of a remittance-man in town for the theater.

Of Robertson Pope, otherwise "The

Black Cougar," he learned considerable. The bucket-shop operator lived in an Italian-period palace on one of the principal avenues given over to motion-picture magnates, oil-boomers and actresses. Pope had a string of seventy branch offices extending from San Diego to Boston, Mass. The Government, through the Post Office Department, had recently been defeated in the higher courts by "The Black Cougar's" attorneys. It had been proved that his business was legitimate.

Fay stayed in Los Angeles that night and went over the record in the Building Inspector's Office the next morning. He was able to do this by posing as an architect in search of villa specifications. He traced on rice-paper, a working drawing of the building wherein Pope had his main office. The floor plans gave the location of the photograph studio, the construction of the ceilings and the thickness of the walls. A skylight was shown above the studio.

He rounded out a day's hard work and went back to Short Hills. The plan he had in mind took slow form. Many details depended on Saidee Isaacs.

A PHONE call from her studio, the next afternoon, brought him from the golf-links.

"I've just moved in," she said. "Everything is topsy-turvy. Wont you bring little Cecil tomorrow? I'll have my camera up then. Good-by."

"Talks like a man," thought Fay. "Snappy and direct."

He passed the day considering the plan of relieving "The Black Cougar" of his available wealth. The bucket-shop operator was shrewder than most men of his type. He was a crook, at heart. Fay realized that no one, not excepting millionaires, raised a louder outcry when robbed than a thief himself. Old Charlie Laurie had once said, "The poor man never squeals when trimmed, but look out for the big grafters."

Fay's precautions when visiting the studio consisted in wearing a baggy, tweed suit, yellow gloves and sun-glasses. He found a child who could play the part of "Cecil" for the first visit.

Saidee Isaacs had accomplished the impossible. A new sign was hung in the place of the old one. New curtains were at the front windows. Grass matting covered the floor of the reception-room. The

camera she had set up between the studio and the dark-room was a fair imitation of a good one. It was covered with a black cloth.

"This is all right," Fay said to her. "But there's one thing to be changed. That skylight has got to be moved south about seven feet." He consulted the rice-paper tracing while the boy sat in the reception-room.

"Why has it got to be moved?"

Fay pointed to the floor of the photographing-room. "The vault is in the wrong place. We can't move it. We have got to move the skylight."

"Has the skylight anything to do with cutting through the top of the safe?"

"Everything, Saidee."

"Then it'll be moved where you say, if a carpenter can do it."

The other tenants of the Bradock Building, so called from a stone over the doorway to "The Black Cougar's" brokerage offices, had ample opportunity to observe Miss Saidee Sorjoni, Photographer of Children. She wore shiny celluloid cuffs and a neat white ruching about her neck. Her fingers were stained with developer. Beneath this yellow stain was a coating of collodium—a sovereign cure for fingerprints.

The boy, whom Fay had picked up in the street, held down the position of messenger. He could be sent on almost any kind of pretext. He had an innocent though dirty face, that disarmed suspicion.

Fay took his time in cutting through the floor over the exact center of "The Black Cougar's" customers' room—a place of wire-wickets, tickers, soft chairs and a long board upon which two boys changed the day's quotations with lightninglike celerity.

The hole he made through the floor of the studio's front office was cone-shaped and ended in a quarter-inch opening. A view could be obtained by means of this peephole of "The Black Cougar's" private den—adjoining the vault.

Fay neatly fitted this opening with a trapdoor covered by a small table. Upon this he placed current magazines and samples of photographic art—left by the late owner of the studio.

"Come here, Saidee," he said to her one day. "Get down and watch Pope. What is he doing at his desk? What is that he has carried from the vault?"

She dropped to her knees and looked

through the opening. She bent lower. Suddenly she rose and arranged her skirt.

"That is queer," she said. "He took a large spool of wire out of the vault, set it on a spindle, passed one end of the wire through a little box he has on his desk and then started winding the wire on another spool. He's doing it now."

Fay lay flat on the grass matting. He saw, through the circular opening, the board-room, the grill and ground-glass partitions and the thick purple neck and bald head of "The Black Cougar." The bucket-shop operator was doing nothing more interesting than winding wire from one spool to another. He stopped now and then to examine a tape which came out of the box on his desk. He reached suddenly. He tore off this tape, pulled down the cover of his desk, sprang from his swivel-chair and went to a window which opened into the compartment occupied by a score of stenographers.

"Petroleum, preferred," he snarled as a timid girl took the tape. "Send them Red Letter No 10. Follow up, one day week. Quote 65 $\frac{7}{8}$ asked. Get me?"

The girl whispered her answer. She disappeared beyond Fay's range of vision. He waited and watched "The Black Cougar" unwind the wire, tuck the spool under his thick arm and hurry into the vault. An inner door slammed. The bucket-shop operator came out, closed the outer door, twirled the combinations and started pacing the thick Turkish rug.

"That's a new one," said Fay to Saidee Isaacs. "We'll have to open that vault to find out what that spool of wire is for!"

"Could it have been an electrical connection to the little box on his desk?"

"No! It was not insulated wire. It looked to me like fine steel or iron wire—perhaps finer than the wire used in the smallest size hairpin."

"The spool was big enough."

"There was all of a thousand feet of wire on it, Saidee."

"It's some trick."

Fay nodded. He got down on his knees and watched "The Black Cougar." He rose and covered up the hole in the floor. Before going out he said to the girl:

"I'm going to have some things sent up. Tonight I start work over the safe. We shall enter the vault by Sunday, when no one is in Pope's office."

"How are you going to cut that vana-

dium steel? Father told me once it was the hardest kind of metal."

Fay glanced at the skylight which had been changed to a new position. "I told you," he smiled, "that I had an idea. It's so far out of my line that the police won't suspect me. I've been accused of using thermite, the oxy-acetylene blow-pipe, the electric-arc, with a water-rheostat, and other devices. This time I'll go everybody one better. The material will be up by special messenger."

Fay left the studio. His thoughts were not on the method he intended using to open "The Black Cougar's" strong box. They drifted between two mysteries—the matter-of-factness of Saidee Isaacs, who was certainly unemotional, and the spool of wire which Pope had locked in the vault.

THE shop Fay visited that afternoon, and where he waited while a glazier finished the last of his order, was far enough from the center of the city to admit of no danger from the police.

"You see," Fay told the proprietor, "I am making some experiments at an ostrich farm near Pasadena. Be careful when you pack the mirrors. I'll have to carry them on a trolley-car."

He took a huge, well-wrapped package after paying the man the price demanded, and rounded the block. He found a messenger standing in front of a telegraph-office.

"For Miss Saidee Sorjoni, photographer," he told the boy. "She's located in the Bradock Building. Here's a four-bit piece. Don't break anything."

Fay watched the boy until he had disappeared. He went through narrow streets to a second glazier's. This man had constructed two halves of a hollow lens. This lens was about three feet in diameter. It was far from being accurate.

"A burning-glass," said Fay, "does not necessarily need to be solid. I intend to paste the edges together with plaster of Paris and fill the whole thing with clear water."

"Going to make a sun-motor?" asked the artisan.

"Something like that. Wrap it in tissue paper. I don't want to break it on my way to Pasadena."

Having thus thrown off all clues, Fay carried the hollow lens to the studio. Saidee Isaacs had received the package, left it

unopened on the dark-room floor and pinned a brief note to the table in the reception-room.

"Gone for the day. Have a headache. Will be at my hotel if you want to call me up."

Fay destroyed the note, took off his coat, tie and collar and started to work rigging the mirrors and the hollow lens upon a scaffolding beneath the skylight.

It was shortly after midnight when he finished adjusting the device to his satisfaction. He went to the window, peered out, saw the night-watchman talking with a uniformed policeman on the street-corner, and smiled with some slight degree of satisfaction.

The hole he cut directly over the vault and beneath the scaffolding was aimed to miss two floor-beams which he had located by a line of nail-heads. He reached, before dawn, the first and upper plate of vanadium steel which protected the vault. He cleared a square space and emptied the plaster and shavings in a box.

A neat trapdoor, hinged on the lower side, was the work of a silent hour wherein he used screws instead of nails on the hinges. He covered the floor with a matting, swept out the corners for chance evidence and washed up.

The arrangement of mirrors, the hollow lens, which had not yet been filled with water, the adjustable scaffolding beneath the skylight, all resembled a part of a photograph outfit designed to intensify the overhead rays of the California sun. The lens reminded Fay of a large goldfish bowl.

Saidee Isaacs came in at seven o'clock. She looked at the scaffolding, removed her gloves, lifted her broad-brimmed hat from her sherry-colored hair and exclaimed:

"You're the limit! I thought I'd got in the wrong studio."

"I've been working all night, Saidee."

"What is that thing?"

"An up-to-date method of cutting steel—particularly vanadium, chrome or high-carbon stuff. It's new in the history of safe-breaking. There's nothing like being original—even in your sinning."

"But will it work?"

"I'll tell you at noon. Lock the front door, pull down the blinds, and if the boy comes send him away. We're going to cop 'The Black Cougar's' bank-roll by Sunday. All we'll leave him is the rubber-band."

"I'm curious about that spool of iron wire, Chester."

"Same here."

"I don't see why he should lock up a ridiculous thing like that."

"He's got the reputation of being very clever. He's been an usurer—for the underworld. He's a telegraph operator and an electrician of sorts. I think he was mixed up with Larry Anderson and 'Blondie' in a phantom-circuit around a pool-room's fast wire. I expected to find the vault protected on top, but they overlooked that. Queer, isn't it, that a clever man like him—a fiend for money and a brain-worker of the first class—should neglect an important trifle?"

Saidee Isaacs said: "They all overlook the essential trifle. We must be careful we don't overlook anything. I'm not afraid of the police half as much as 'The Black Cougar.'"

Fay glanced at the matting over the trapdoor. "You're sure there's going to be two hundred thousand in the vault?"

"His last statement given to the post-office authorities showed that much, or more, balance. He also has money with the Coast National."

"How do you know?"

"It was in the newspapers three weeks ago when the trial was going on."

Fay was satisfied with the girl's answer. He heard her moving around in the dark-room. He rolled the grass matting to one side and lifted the trapdoor over the vault.

The bright sunlight illuminated the room. A beam reflected from the mirrors on the scaffolding. The city roared beyond the locked door.

Fay drew a piece of blue chalk from his pocket, knelt down on the vanadium steel plate and carefully outlined an oblong—three feet long and two feet wide. He rose and stared at his design. He went to work filling the hollow lens with water. Saidee mixed the plaster of Paris. The edges were quickly sealed. A small opening was left at the top. Through this aperture the air rushed out as the liquid ran in. This hole was finally stopped with chewing-gum.

"Useful stuff," said the girl. "With that and a hair-pin you could fix anything."

Fay climbed upon the table and adjusted the hollow lens. He blocked one edge so that it could be shifted. He raised and lowered the frame upon which it rested. A sudden flash, followed by a small cloud of smoke, indicated that the focused rays had touched the woodwork at the edge of the trapdoor.

"Hotter than any electric-arc," he said. "Now watch when I get the point of light on the vanadium. This is the same scheme old Archimedes used centuries ago to burn ships."

"I thought he used mirrors."

"Perhaps he did. I've got mirrors to heat the vanadium and keep the temperature of the plate high. Our chief difficulty will be in the loss of heat due to radiation. The—"

Saidee Isaacs sprang back from the opening. A sizzling sounded. Blue smoke filled the room. The plate was being melted along the line Fay had drawn. The movement of the sun, from east to west, was changing the position of the ray.

Fay climbed to the table and adjusted his curved mirrors. He focused them about the spot of whiter light that coned down from the hollow lens. The California sun is bright. The skylight did not require opening.

"We're getting on!" he exclaimed. "I've gone through the first plate and reached the fireproofing. I'll have to change the lens and spot across the oblong. My east and west lines are easy. The cross lines will take some time."

"How about the heat melting the paint in the vault?"

"The asbestos layers between the plates will prevent that. See! We were lucky that 'The Black Cougar's' was both fire-proof and burglar-proof. But then, Saidee, they make them all that way."

The girl shielded her eyes and leaned over the opening in the floor. A narrow channel showed where the spot of light had cut through the first vanadium plate. The fused metal formed bubbles along the edges. Beneath the bubbles was the white fireproofing material.

Fay pulled her back. "Look out for that ray," he said. "I estimate its temperature to be all of five thousand degrees Fahrenheit. That'll melt anything—particularly high-carbon steel."

"Could you have done the same thing with the oxy-acetylene blow-torch?"

"No! You have to have an edge to start on. All we had here was a flat plate. This is the only way we could have done it. The electric-arc requires a heavy amperage—far more than can be obtained from a lamp-circuit. Besides, the coppers would suspect me if I used an arc."

"They're going to think this was done by electricity."

"No, they're not. We'll leave the mirrors behind us. It'll throw them off my trail."

Saidee went out at noon and returned with two lunches bought at a restaurant. She found Fay standing on the table and holding the lens so that it spotted tiny blisters first along the north, then south, lines of the oblong. The sun went behind a cloud. Fay sprang to the floor lightly. He sat down, turned in his chair, and stared at the top of the vault. "We've got the first plate pretty well cut through," he said. "Suppose you look and see what 'The Black Cougar' is doing."

She rose and dusted her knees after a long study of the operator's office.

"He's got that spool of iron wire on his desk. He's been running it through the little box. There's a lot of tape scattered about. It must be a quotation machine of some kind, Chester."

"No. The days of the old swindle are gone. He couldn't get away with fake quotations. He may have a fast wire and a slow wire in his offices. The customer trades on the slow wire while the firm sells on the fast wire. But then, I understand 'The Black Cougar's' business is done mostly through the mails. That spool he has down there has something to do with his mail game. Maybe it's a system to beat the market."

"There never will be such a thing!"

Fay nodded. "You're very wise," he mused, staring directly at her. "You don't remind me of your old man, at all. He did a lot of very heavy work—such as blasting and using a can-opener. You inherited your quick-wittedness from your mother's side, I suppose?"

"Partly."

Fay went to work with the lens as the sun came out. He finished the first cutting by two o'clock. He lifted the plate out, after allowing it to cool. It was three quarters of an inch in thickness. Its edges were brittle as glass.

"I'll cut away the fire-proofing," he told Saidee, "and get ready for the sun tomorrow. I expect, from what I know of the Derryton boxes, that the middle plate will be almost twice as thick as the outer one. That means a lot of burning."

Saidee Isaacs attended to the meals. She watched the studio door in case of interruption. Once Fay saw her adjust the shade at a certain height. This shade could be seen from the street.

He recalled an old signal used by house prowlers to indicate that it was all right for pals to enter the house. The thought flashed through him that the girl had a confederate outside. He puzzled over this matter, without speaking to her about it. There seemed no reason to suspect treachery on her part.

Her interest in robbing "The Black Cougar" reached a high point when he succeeded, after two days' work, in cutting out the second, or central, plate of the vault. This plate was an inch and a quarter in thickness. It was designed to resist drills. It was hardened on the surface and somewhat soft inside.

The fumes and smoke from the burning metal floated through the skylight. The heat of the hot spot was sufficient to vaporize most metal. Fay added to this heat the radiations from the concave mirrors. He feared, at times, that there would be indication inside the vault that work was going on above.

Saidee, on watch over the peek-hole, kept him informed of "The Black Cougar's" movements. The bucket-shop operator had not used the spool of wire for two days. He had entered the vault but twice. Each time he came out with yellow bills in his hands.

"Tomorrow's Saturday," said Saidee. That's a half-holiday for brokers. There won't be anybody in the office during the afternoon or Sunday. We must go through the last plate and get that money."

Fay washed up and put on his coat.

"I'll attend to our getaway," he said. "I'll bring a lot of tourist folders and lay them around the reception-room. They'll all indicate to the average sleuth that we fled to Seattle and from there took an Alaskan boat."

"There isn't a dick in this town who wouldn't fall for that," she said. "The detectives I've met are a lot of boobs. There's only one or two in the Secret Service who are any good."

"Old Triggy Drew?"

"Yes, and Marway—the man who was never seen by a criminal."

Fay opened the door.

"I've heard of him," he said going out.

The railroad and steamship folders were secured. Saidee's inspection of her room at the hotel, and a general search of the photograph studio for overlooked clues, left Saturday and Sunday for work. It was that period of the California summer when

the sun is brightest. The girl reported the office below clear of clerks and customers. The janitress came and scrubbed up. The watchman made his rounds. The time-lock on the vault's outer door had been set by "The Black Cougar" so that no one could open it until Monday morning.

Fay took the chance. He went through the inner plate Saturday afternoon. He burned a larger hole, set the lens and allowed the high swing of the overhead sun to trace out a line. Smoke and vapor rose from the sizzling pencil of light. Drops of molten metal fell within the vault, the floor of which was not carpeted.

THE job was finished soon after noon on Sunday. Fay looped a wire around the plate and tapped its edges with a hammer. The last of the metal cracked. The plate swung free. The way was open.

"I'll go down!" exclaimed Saidee.

"No, not yet. Let the things cool off. Help me get the lens apart. We'll destroy it. We'll clean up everything incriminating."

"But—"

"Don't be in such a hurry. The vault may be 'bugged' inside. Suppose there's an electric mat?"

"Oh, you know best! But I'm very anxious."

Fay took his time. He coolly moved to the front window, raised the blind an inch and looked out. Autos and trolley-cars hurried by. Policemen stood directing traffic. Tourists thronged the street.

He went to Saidee Isaacs. She helped him lift down the lens. He poured out the water, smashed the two halves with the hammer, and tossed the fragments into a box.

"They'll never suspect what that was," he said. "Now, give me your hand and lower me into the vault. I can't touch the edges yet. They're still hot!"

She braced herself over the opening, grasped his wrists, and lowered him. Her strength was considerable. He felt her face close to his own as she leaned.

"Let go," he said, steadying his legs.

He landed on the metal floor of the vault. The light that streamed through the jagged opening was sufficient for his purpose. He started removing ledgers and cash-boxes to the center of the strong-room. Some, but not all, of these boxes contained money. It took him ten minutes, no longer, to count up the spoil.

Allowing for small bills and silver, he had obtained thirty-seven thousand dollars. He had expected two hundred thousand.

He bundled up the larger packages of bills, snapped rubber-bands about them and began a search of the shelves. He overlooked nothing. Book after book was torn apart.

Having finished with the last ledger, he stared up at Saidee's intent face framed in the jagged opening.

"You're a fine pal!" he said. "I've only got thirty-seven grand. You've steered me wrong!"

"Have you found the sucker-list?"

"No. I didn't see it."

"Look around. It must be there. He probably had no copy. He wouldn't trust anybody with a copy. It is far more important than the money."

Fay coolly tossed up the bundle of bank-bills. He hesitated.

"Look again—it's not here," she said. "Look on the shelves. See if there isn't a secret panel, or something."

Fay had already searched for any break in the metal of the vault. It was smooth and enameled. He regarded the remaining objects.

"The spools of iron wire are here."

"Give one of them to me. Put it in my hands."

"It's very heavy. We might as well leave them."

"No! We must not overlook a single thing. Hand me a spool. I can lift it."

Fay poised a heavy spool between his fingers. Saidee drew it through the opening. He waited until she lowered a short piece of clothes-line. He went up this, hooked his knee over the edge of the plate, and rose to her side.

"We might as well split the money two ways and go," he said coldly. "I'm not exactly satisfied. I should never have gone into this thing. We've smeared things up. We've left more or less of a trail and gotten very little for our trouble."

Saidee sat on the floor. She started searching through the torn books. Now and then she glanced at Fay without saying anything. Disappointment stamped her features when she finished. She projected the package of money toward him with a sharp kick.

"It's all yours, Chester!"

"No. I'm not that kind of a man. But you're a foolish little moll. Here we've

gone and laid ourselves open to twenty years in stir for next to nothing. We haven't even put a dent in 'The Black Cougar's' bank-roll. The chances are that he transferred most of his ill-gotten gains to the Coast National Bank."

"All I wanted was the sucker-list. That would have put him out of business. He has about twenty thousand preferred names of boobs in this country who will bite at anything."

Fay scraped the collodium from his finger-tips. He washed his hands, went through the studio rooms, looked everywhere for possible left-over clues, and then said:

"Come on. I'll carry the money. We might as well leave here."

She reached down and lifted the spool of iron wire. "You take the money and I'll take this," she said at the door. "We'll separate. I may have to come back here—so give me the key."

"What for?"

Fay caught a direct stare full of meaning. "You're not a boob, though you fell like one. My name isn't Saidee Laurie. It's Saidee Isaacs of the Secret Service, Post Office Department, at present. We intercepted your note to Charlie Laurie at Dannemora. They had me decipher your rather simple code. The order was out to bring you in. I had been working on 'The Black Cougar' case. I thought you might be of more help outside than inside. So I posed as Charlie Laurie's daughter and got you to help me rob the vault. The rogues'-gallery picture was framed up to make things more convincing."

Fay's eyes flashed.

"You see," went on Saidee Isaacs, "the importance of getting 'The Black Cougar's' sucker-list overshadowed the importance of putting an end to your activities. There was no way, through the law, that would stop the bucket-shop operator. He had the list, and as long as it was in his possession, he could trim the suckers. They'd buy anything, and they wouldn't squeal on him."

Fay blurted: "Well, in that case you've lost and I have gained. Thirty-seven thousand isn't going back to him, nor is it going to the Government. I'm going to keep it—for professional services."

"It's yours, Chester. The police have been pulled off this job. You can go free."

"What about the sucker-list? Who's coming back here?"

"I may bring Marway. I may not need to bring him."

Saidee lifted the heavy spool from her knee. "After you," she said. "Open the door for me. Go out to the golf-club and wait."

"I'll wait about twenty minutes!" he exclaimed hotly. "I suppose Marway will order me pinched."

"I'm in charge of the entire case. I've failed so far—unless—"

"What?"

"This spool contains part of the sucker list. I don't see how it can. Do you?"

Fay jerked the door open, allowed the girl to pass through, and locked it. He thrust the key into her hand.

"Good-by," he said.

"No. Promise you will wait on the links for me. You have my word you won't be pinched."

His packing of the two kit-bags in his room at the club took no longer than fifteen minutes. He paid his bill, left his bags with a porter, and went out on the links.

Golfers, a fair gallery, and caddies were scattered over the green. He sat down at a table and pulled out his watch. The California sun was sinking over the Coast Range when a taxi churned through the dust, swung under the *porte-cochère* and discharged Saidee Isaacs.

She crossed the turf with her face as inscrutable as ever. Her hand darted over the table. Shading her eyes with her parasol, she whispered:

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Chester, but we found the sucker-list. Part was in that spool. Marway's assistant found it ten minutes ago."

"How?"

"By experimentation. I told Marway what I had seen 'The Black Cougar' doing at his desk. You remember he ran the wire through a ticker-machine and the tape came out printed with dots and dashes?"

"I didn't know they were dots and dashes."

"Yes. He's a telegraph operator—an old Phillips code man. His stenographers could read Morse like print."

Fay began to see the purpose of the wire.

"The sucker-list," continued Saidee, "is magnetized in the fine wire that is wound about the spools. Each few inches contains a name and address in dots and

dashes. The Black Cougar had an apparatus to magnetize the wire. Marway's assistant said this apparatus probably consisted of a small solenoid through which the wire was drawn at the beginning. A touch of a key would make a dot. A longer touch made a dash. The wire was special—hard and capable of being made into a permanent magnet."

"Then he could read these same dots and dashes by running the wire through the relay-ticker on his desk?"

"Yes. That part of the idea has been used in duplex telegraphy and in seeing-over-a-wire-apparatus. You can find it in the technical books."

"How did Marway demonstrate it?"

"By a small pocket-compass. It's really very ingenious and simple. 'The Black Cougar' kept his whole sucker-list on the spools. He has no copy of it. He is beaten without it. He might as well go out of business. Marway and the assistant operative are going to mail every sucker on the list a warning letter authorized by the Government. Some of them will get wise."

"But most of them will fall for another swindler."

"We did our part—pulled 'The Black Cougar's' claws."

"And I pulled the chestnuts for you."

"Thirty-seven thousand dollars and the satisfaction of knowing you did a good deed in a wicked world is no chestnut."

"I'm going East on the first train tonight, Saidee."

"Stay around. Marway would like to meet you."

"I thought he had never been seen by a criminal?"

"You're not a criminal. You only think you are."

Fay leaned over the table.

"I'm a dub," he admitted. "I let you put it all over me."

"And I let you go free with my best wishes," said Saidee Isaacs. "Turn for turn, Chester. Don't write to prisons and give your address in code lettering. I had orders to come here and arrest you—about a week ago."

Fay flushed. She was gone across the short-cropped turf.

"I'm a dub," he repeated, "and yet I wouldn't have had it happen any other way for the world."

The Case of Jimmy Madden



Elmer E
Ferris.

WHEN Jimmy Madden was brought into court and arraigned upon a charge of accessory to burglary, he gazed about in a state of helpless bewilderment. He had never been in a courtroom like this. The heavy hand of the law was upon him, and he bore the air of one who was prepared to submit to whatever he might get, and who expected to get the worst of it.

"Has this prisoner any attorney?" asked the judge.

"Not now," responded the sheriff. "He hasn't any money to pay a lawyer."

"Step up here, my boy," requested the judge, and as Jimmy approached the bench, he was a little surprised to note an expression of kindly interest upon the judge's face.

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"Do you live in this city?"

"No sir."

"Where do you live?"

"I'd rather not tell."

"Have you friends or relatives here?"

"No sir."

"Any money?"

"Only sixty cents."

"That would not go very far toward employing an attorney," smiled the judge. "I will appoint a lawyer to defend you. Mr. Clerk, make out an affidavit of poverty." The judge made an entry.

"I will appoint Colonel Walcott to defend this prisoner," he announced.

Now, in cases such as this the State paid only a nominal fee, and it was customary for the Court to appoint some young lawyer who was not overburdened with business. When, therefore, Judge Graham announced the appointment of Colonel Edward Walcott, who was admittedly the ablest as well as the busiest and most prosperous member of the local bar, it occasioned considerable surprise, especially to Colonel Walcott himself.

"If Your Honor please," protested the Colonel, "the Court is probably aware that I do not make a practice of taking criminal cases, and it so happens that I have an unusual number of important cases for trial at this term and—"

"I understand all that, Colonel," smiled the judge, "but I have a special reason for wishing you to defend this case. I have already made the entry."

"Very well," assented the Colonel testily. "Will the Court please enter a plea of not guilty and set the case for trial at the foot of the criminal docket?"

"I will so mark it," said the judge.

Meanwhile Jimmy, who was vaguely conscious that something had happened in his favor, glanced at the sheriff to see what he must do next.

"I will be over at the jail in a few days," said Colonel Walcott to the sheriff.

"Come along," commanded the sheriff. Jimmy turned and stumped along behind the sheriff. His left foot had been amputated and rested upon a wooden stump. His clothes were seedy, and he bore the unkempt appearance of one who had been confined for some time in the jail.

As he disappeared from the courtroom, some of the attorneys chaffed the Colonel about his new client.

"Very well, gentlemen," smiled the Colonel grimly, "I may surprise you by putting in a little time on that boy's case."

IT was several days before he called at the jail. It seemed to Jimmy that his lawyer was taking very little interest in his case—a mistaken idea on his part, however, for the Colonel had already filed and argued two motions in the case, one of which had been sustained by the Court. When he finally appeared at the jail, he proceeded promptly to business. "Come over in the corner where we can be alone," said he. "How did you lose your foot?"

"Got run over in the freight-yard," replied Jimmy.

"Were you working or just fooling around?"

"I wasn't working."

"I see. Well, tell me how you came to be in town and how you got into this fix."

"I left home to follow that circus," responded Jimmy. "And I met a guy here I never saw before and we started out to bum some grub and—"

"How long have you been tramping?" interrupted the Colonel.

"I haven't been tramping," retorted Jimmy.

"You talk like a tramp. How long since you left home?"

"A month."

"Very well—go on."

"I stayed out at the gate, and he went around to the back door, and when he found that the family was away, he crawled through the window and took that stuff and—"

"What did he get?"

"He got thirty-six dollars and some jewelry."

"How do you know?"

"We went down back of the railroad station, and he showed it to me."

"Did you take any of it?"

"No, he wouldn't give me any of it, and he hopped onto a freight train and got out of town, and then the police arrested me."

"Did you talk to the police about it?"

"Yes, the policeman took me into a room alone and made me think he was going to send me to prison if I didn't tell him all about it."

"Do you remember what you told him?"

"No, but I thought if I told him what he wanted me to, he would let me off."

"That is bad. You have a very good case on the facts, but probably you said something that hurts your case. So he threatened to send you to prison unless you talked to him, did he?"

"Yes, he said he could send me to prison or he could get me off."

"He did, did he? Is your mother a widow?"

"How did you know?"

"I just surmised it."

"Yes, she's a widow," admitted Jimmy.

A NUMBER of weeks intervened—weeks which seemed like months to Jimmy—before the case was called for trial. During this time the Colonel did not appear at the jail again, and Jimmy now felt certain that his lawyer took no interest in his case; but then, what could he expect? He wasn't paying the Colonel anything.

It was with a mingled feeling of relief and hopelessness that he finally followed the sheriff into court again. Then came a surprise. Colonel Walcott, instead of being indifferent, was most friendly and solicitous. While waiting for the case to be called, he sat beside Jimmy, his arm over the back of his chair, and carried on a whispered conversation with him. The instant the case was up, the Colonel sprang to his feet, alert, indignant, sarcastic and full of fight. He was not only Jimmy's lawyer but his champion, his defender, his other self. In fact, with the utmost abandon the Colonel seemed to identify himself with Jimmy. This was a novel experience to Jimmy, and he felt a growing sense of importance. It was great to be identified with a big man like Colonel Walcott.

The evidence was brief and purely circumstantial. The case proceeded smoothly until the officer took the stand to testify to his conversation with Jimmy after the arrest. It was then that Colonel Walcott showed his mettle. He asked that the jury be temporarily withdrawn. He cross-examined the officer savagely as to what he had told Jimmy. He placed Jimmy upon the stand to testify upon that point. He

then presented to the Court a searching legal argument backed by numerous authorities in support of his objection to this testimony upon the ground of duress. It was upon this point that the Colonel made his hardest fight. The Court finally sustained the objection. It was plain to be seen that the Colonel considered this the critical point of the case. However, it is an old adage among lawyers that "you never can tell what a jury will do." The Colonel took nothing for granted. He fought the case to a finish.

IT was after the evidence was in and while Colonel Walcott was making his argument to the jury that Jimmy's conception of his own case underwent a radical change. Up to the time of the trial he had taken his arrest as a matter of course—something naturally to be expected under the circumstances; in fact he had a secret consciousness of guilt. But when the Colonel, his voice trembling with indignation, described the officious zeal of those policemen in pouncing upon this crippled, friendless boy who had come to town looking for work, Jimmy for the first time began to feel a little indignant himself. True, he had not come to town looking for work, but those officers were certainly pretty fresh, jumping onto a fellow that way!

And when the Colonel in a fine outburst of invective and sarcasm tore into shreds the evidence upon which the prosecution was based, it seemed perfectly clear to Jimmy that there had never been a vestige of excuse for arresting him at all. The whole proceeding was an outrage! But Colonel Walcott did not stop here. He not only attacked the officers and the prosecution but also society itself.

"This case, gentlemen of the jury," said he, "is entitled 'The State against James Madden.' It ought to be entitled 'Jimmy Madden against the State.' Here we have a crippled, friendless boy, just drifting about with a very good prospect of going to the devil. Why? Simply because he hasn't had a chance and he has no chance today. This boy is entitled to an education, to an opportunity for self-development and usefulness. Who owes it to him? I say that society owes it to him. And who constitutes society? Why, such men as you and I. We simply go about our business and our pleasures and leave such boys as Jimmy Madden to grope and drift and finally go down and under. Society to-

day, instead of prosecuting this boy, should be helping him."

The jury was visibly impressed, but no person in the audience was more profoundly moved by the Colonel's eloquence than Jimmy. He felt genuinely sorry for himself. He bowed his head, and a tear trickled down his cheek. This, together with his seedy clothes, his wooden stump and his youthfulness, made him a pathetic figure.

The Colonel perceived that the psychological moment had come for closing his plea. "Gentlemen of the jury," cried he, "I leave this boy in your hands."

THE jury was out less than an hour when they sent in word that they had agreed. The bailiff telephoned the sheriff to bring in the prisoner.

Jimmy was plainly frightened and nervous, and as the jury filed in, he watched them anxiously.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" asked the Court.

"We have," responded the foreman as he arose from his seat.

"Do you find the defendant guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

The Colonel grasped Jimmy's hand. "You're free," he said.

"What shall I do now?" asked Jimmy.

The after-glow of his oratory and the thrill of victory gave the Colonel a humanitarian impulse.

"Come up to my office in about an hour. I wish to talk with you."

"All right," agreed Jimmy promptly.

As he left the courtroom and walked out into the street, life looked good once more. He was free now to go or come as he pleased, but more important than that, he had a friend, a powerful friend, in Colonel Walcott. He went up to the city park and sat down upon a bench. The spell of the Colonel's oratory was still upon him. It seemed to him that Colonel Walcott was one of the greatest men in the world. Jimmy had never witnessed anything so thrilling and impressive as when the Colonel stood there in the courtroom dominating the whole situation by sheer force of his masterful personality, his learning and his eloquence. Jimmy wondered if it were not possible that he himself might some day become a man like Colonel Walcott, and for the first time in his life he felt a flutter of personal ambition. Colonel Wal-

cott was right about it, he had never had a chance; but now he was going to have a chance!

PROMPTLY at the appointed time he was at the office, but it was nearly three hours before the Colonel appeared. He was accompanied by a client in an important civil case in which he was now deeply engrossed, and he had forgotten all about his appointment with Jimmy. As he caught sight of him in the waiting-room, he felt impatient and irritated. He ushered his client into the inner office.

"Now then," he said to Jimmy sharply, "all I wanted to say to you was this: You had a narrow escape. The thing for you to do is to go home and get a job and behave yourself."

"Yes sir," admitted Jimmy, with sinking heart.

The Colonel passed into the inner room. Jimmy arose and slowly stumped out of the office, and for an hour or two he wandered aimlessly about the street.

That evening, after the Colonel closed his office and started for home, he saw Jimmy coming out of a saloon across the way.

"Back at his old tricks," thought the Colonel.

Jimmy caught sight of the Colonel and waved his hand familiarly. Colonel Walcott nodded stiffly and quickened his pace up the street.

"That is what comes of taking these confounded criminal cases," he muttered in disgust. "It puts one upon familiar terms with the riffraff of society!"

Glancing back, he saw Jimmy disappear through the doorway of another saloon.

Just then an unusual thing happened to Colonel Walcott. His *alter ego*—Colonel-Number-Two, so to speak—turned savagely upon him. "See here, Colonel," said Colonel-Number-Two, "has it never occurred to you that you are getting to be a moral four-flusher? You have been trying lawsuits for so many years that you have forgotten how to be genuine and sincere. That forensic sympathy which you showed for that boy was nothing but piffle, and you know it! What you said about society owing him its help was true enough, but so far as you were concerned it was bunk, pure bunk!"

"Is that so?" rejoined the Colonel as he stopped at the corner and rubbed his chin reflectively. "Let us see about that."

HE turned and walked rapidly back to the saloon into which his erstwhile client had disappeared. Jimmy was leaning against the bar, chatting with the bartender.

"Will you come up to my office for a few minutes?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes sir," responded Jimmy promptly.

Arrived at the office, the Colonel locked the door and motioned Jimmy to a seat.

"Well," he began, "I see that you can't learn anything from experience. You no sooner get free than you head straight for a saloon, and that means that you are heading straight for the devil."

"Where else could I go?" protested Jimmy warmly. "I wanted to be where I could talk to somebody, and there wasn't anybody else that wanted to see me!"

"Why don't you go home and get a job?"

"Home!" echoed Jimmy bitterly. "I don't want to go home; my mother don't care anything for me. She took me out of school and made me go to work, and she took all my wages, and anyway my job wasn't good for anything. Nobody wants a fellow with only one leg."

"What do you propose to do—become a tramp?"

"I don't know," replied Jimmy despondently. Then suddenly he turned upon the Colonel. "What you said to the jury about me never having a chance was so!" he cried hotly. "And I thought that maybe you was going to—"

"Never mind about that," interrupted the Colonel, but there was a twinkle of amusement in his eye. "What would you like to do? What kind of a chance would you wish?"

Once more the initiative was with Jimmy, and he did not know what to say.

"You are handicapped physically and always will be," pursued the Colonel. "I can see only one way for you ever to amount to anything."

"What is that?" asked Jimmy.

"Get an education and learn how to use it! How far along were you in school?"

"I was nearly through the eighth grade."

The Colonel wheeled his chair around and gazed meditatively out of the window. "Let us suppose," said he, "that you had an opportunity to earn your board and clothes by taking care of a lawn and a garage and driving a machine occasionally, and that you had a special teacher to help you finish your eighth-grade work so you

could enter a high school next fall. And let us suppose that you had a chance to go through the high school—would you be willing to buckle right down to that job? Would you call that a chance?"

"I guess so," replied Jimmy.

"Well, I am going to offer you that chance, but I don't want you to decide the matter hastily. Here are two dollars. I will give you a note to Mrs. Brown, who runs a boarding-house on Eighth Street. Go up there and stay tonight. Think this thing over carefully and let me know your decision at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Now, remember, I mean business, and I don't wish you to go into it unless you mean business. It will mean hard work. Furthermore, it means that you must behave yourself. No saloons, no pool-halls, no cigarettes. You understand?"

"Yes sir."

"Very well. Let me know in the morning."

JIMMY went up to Mrs. Brown's boarding-house and obtained a room for the night. He sat alone in the room for a time and then, becoming lonesome, he went out and strolled down the street. He had not given the Colonel's proposition any serious thought because it had not occurred to him that there was anything to do but accept. As he was passing a pool-room and heard the clicking of the balls, he glanced inside. Jimmy was a fairly good pool-player and enjoyed the game. He started to enter but halted in the doorway. He recalled what the Colonel had said: "No saloons, no pool-halls, no cigarettes." If he should go in there and the Colonel should know it, he would lose confidence in him. He reluctantly turned back and walked up to the city park. Somehow this little piece of self-discipline was distasteful to him. He seated himself upon a bench and then, as in the case of the Colonel, Jimmy's *alter ego* turned loose upon him.

Now, let it be admitted in the very beginning that Jimmy-Number-Two had some of the instincts of a hobo. And this is what he said: "Colonel Walcott is a pretty strict man. He would make you walk a chalk-line. It's hard work to study. It used to make your head ache. You wouldn't have much fun, and you would have to work like the devil. You aint cut out for a scholar. You don't like to be with a crowd of sissies and dudes like them high-school scholars. Colonel Walcott

would boss everything you do, and you wouldn't have any liberty any more. You can get a living without going to school. There's always plenty of people that will give you something to eat, and you can see the country and not have to work; and if you want to play a game of pool or anything else, you can do it and it wont be anybody's business. You've got two dollars in your pocket. Go on back there and get into that game of pool! What's the use!"

Jimmy arose and started back toward the pool-room, but suddenly there flashed into his mind a vision of the courtroom scene—the Colonel standing before the jury making his eloquent plea—and once more Jimmy felt a faint aspiration to try to become a man like Colonel Walcott. When he reached the street-corner, he turned almost involuntarily in the direction of Mrs. Brown's boarding-house. He went up to his room, undressed and went to bed, and then he knew for a certainty that he was going to accept Colonel Walcott's proposition.

IT would be a pleasure to record the fact, if only it were a fact, that Jimmy entered heartily into his studies and became a source of much gratification both to his teachers and to the Colonel. But the reorganization of a personality, especially an undisciplined personality like Jimmy's, is not so simple a matter. The tutor who was employed to prepare him for the high school gave up in disgust at the end of three weeks. However, the Colonel employed another one and also devoted a good deal of his own time to holding Jimmy to his task. The fact that Colonel Walcott was an influential member of the Board of Education may have had some connection with the further fact that Jimmy did enter high school that fall; but he got in by an eyelash at that.

From the outset, although he appreciated in a general way this opportunity for an education, he found that hard study lacked interest. What interested him was life, that is to say, automobiles, girls, baseball and the like. He had a bright mind and succeeded in squeezing past his examinations, but his standings were unsatisfactory and occasioned the Colonel a good deal of uneasiness. On the other hand Jimmy could have passed an examination in automobiles with a perfect mark. He knew every part of the Colonel's car and

learned to operate it skillfully—so skillfully, in fact, that he was finally arrested for speeding—which cost the Colonel a fine of twenty-five dollars.

Meanwhile he began to take pains with his personal attire. The Colonel had provided him with good clothes and an artificial foot. By dint of persistent practice he learned to walk with a scarcely perceptible limp. He grew fastidious about his shoes and neckties. Being possessed of a winning personality he soon began to produce the inevitable reaction upon the girls. They began to take notice of Jimmy.

Now, it would have been contrary to human nature for his interest in girls to remain indefinitely attached to a whole group. Sooner or later it was bound to focalize. It was most natural, therefore, that he should begin to concentrate his thoughts upon Miss Mae Jackson. It was not alone that Mae was pretty, but she showed a decided preference for him, whereupon he began to note that she was in a class all by herself. There was a certain dainty distinction in her manner of dress, the way she wore her hair, the musical inflection of her voice, that agitated Jimmy profoundly. He fell in love, and his affection was ardently reciprocated. This was quickly followed by a betrothal, and then their thoughts naturally turned to matrimony. After much deliberation Jimmy determined to quit school and obtain employment so that he might get married sooner. But there was Colonel Walcott!

The plan itself was a most reasonable one, since life would not be worth living without Mae—but Colonel Walcott was a hard-headed man who could not be expected to appreciate the depth of Jimmy's devotion or the supernal qualities of a girl like Mae. He grew indignant as he anticipated the Colonel's arbitrary interference in his private affairs. What right did Colonel Walcott have to dictate to him in a matter where his whole future happiness was at stake! He resolved to stand firm.

When, however, he finally laid the project before the Colonel, he was surprised to find him both interested and sympathetic.

"Tomorrow is Saturday," said the Colonel. "Bring the young lady up to my office in the afternoon and we will go over the matter. I can undoubtedly be of some assistance to you."

WHEN the Colonel ushered them into his library on the following afternoon, he was the very impersonation of courtesy and kindness.

"Now then," said he affably, "we will get right down to business. I might say, however, that I believe in early marriages. When a young couple like you really love each other, they should marry just as soon as they can shape up their affairs so as to support a home. Now let us see about the expense." The Colonel then made a detailed estimate of housekeeping expenses for two.

He demonstrated the necessity of an income of at least nine hundred dollars. "But, of course," continued he with a smile, "we should add a further expense for the baby when it comes." He then made a careful estimate of the expenses involved in raising a baby, assuming, of course, that the little one would encounter the usual ills of babyhood such as croup, colic, whooping-cough and measles—all of which would necessitate considerable outlay in doctor's bills. These details, while perfectly reasonable, produced a somewhat dampening effect, especially those pertaining to baby-raising. Somehow the matrimonial project seemed to bear a different aspect there in the Colonel's library, in the light of his statistics, from that it bore out in the park with the moonlight shining through the trees.

"I would say," concluded the Colonel, "that you will be perfectly safe in getting married upon an income of one thousand dollars, and I think without doubt that I can assist in getting Jimmy a position that will pay that much; but of course it will be necessary for him to spend a little more time in preparation. Business men these days will not intrust a young man with a good position unless he has at least a high-school education. However, that will take only two years more. You are both young, and the time will pass quickly. I have no doubt you will be true to each other. How does this plan impress you?"

The Colonel's presentation of the matter was so entirely reasonable, in fact so unanswerable, that Jimmy and Mae both indorsed his plan and promised to follow it.

THAT fall Jimmy became very much interested in the football team. He was appointed cheer-leader, which absorbed a good part of his time, and he gradually be-

gan to neglect his betrothed. She, on the other hand, had begun to accept the attentions of another ardent suitor who was the fortunate possessor of two perfectly good feet, and it was hard for her to refrain from invidious comparisons.

Before winter arrived, she and Jimmy reached a frank and definite agreement. They would be good friends, nothing more. She assured him that she would always be a sister to him, and this was perfectly satisfactory to him.

Meanwhile automobiles, girls and athletics had been making serious inroads upon his study hours, and as the end of the school year approached, he had an uneasy sense of impending disaster. When, however, he received notice that he had been conditioned in three of his courses and had barely passed in the others the fact that his luck had finally deserted him came upon him with a shock.

It was clear that he could never get through high school now. He felt relieved to know that Colonel Walcott was just then away from the city. Jimmy would not have dared to face the Colonel. He saw nothing to do but leave town, although he did not know where to go. He recollected that a school friend of his had gone to Omaha the year before and had secured employment with a wholesale grocery company. Possibly he too might get a job there. After careful consideration he decided to try.

He felt much like a fugitive from justice. He had treated Colonel Walcott's kindness and generosity in a contemptible way. Furthermore, now that he had lost it, he saw that his position in that town as a high-school student and protégé of Colonel Walcott had offered a wonderfully fine chance to amount to something in the world. And now he had frittered his chance away!

ARRIVED at Omaha, he hunted up his friend, and within a week he was fortunate enough to obtain a position with this company at a salary of ten dollars per week; but he soon discovered that it was one thing to get a job and quite another thing to make good. The work was very hard. It taxed Jimmy's capacity to the utmost. He found it necessary to start at eight o'clock in the morning and continue hard at it until six at night. There was no option about it as in the case of high-school studies. The work was there and must be done.

One evening about three weeks later as he was completing his work for the day, he became aware that some one was standing at the side of his desk. Glancing up, he saw Colonel Walcott.

"Good evening, Jimmy," greeted the Colonel with a smile.

Jimmy acknowledged the greeting rather shamefacedly.

"Come up to the hotel and take supper with me," invited the Colonel cordially.

Jimmy accepted. It was a good supper. The Colonel put Jimmy at his ease by commenting in a friendly manner upon various matters of interest—making no reference whatever to the unfortunate high-school record. After supper they repaired to the Colonel's room. Colonel Walcott deliberately lighted a cigar and then turned suddenly to Jimmy.

"Well?" said he.

"I couldn't help leaving town, Colonel Walcott," protested Jimmy warmly. "I saw I could never get through high school, and I couldn't face up!"

"What kind of a job have you here?" asked the Colonel.

"Pretty fair—I get ten dollars a week."

"Hard work?"

"You bet!" grinned Jimmy.

"Harder work than high school, eh?" smiled the Colonel quizzically.

"I should say so!" responded Jimmy grimly.

"Tell me this, Jimmy. Did not your two years in high school help you to get this job? Could you have landed it as you were two years ago—do you think?"

"Why, of course I couldn't have got the job the way I was then," replied Jimmy.

"Then two years of good hard work would have prepared you still better. Isn't that true?" pursued the Colonel.

"Sure," admitted Jimmy. "But what is the use of talking about that? I lost out!"

COLONEL WALCOTT relighted his cigar and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. Then he arose and began to pace the room. Jimmy shifted uneasily in his chair. The Colonel finally halted in front of the boy.

"Jimmy!" said he earnestly. "If you would put in two months' work under a good tutor and work as hard as you are now doing, I would guarantee that you could get back into your class; and if you would put the same kind of work into the

last two years of high school, you would be just that much better prepared for a business life. Preparedness is the secret of success in business or in anything else. You are bright enough. It is merely a matter of work. Now I am going to offer that chance again. What do you say?"

"Why are you doing all this for me?" asked Jimmy in perplexity.

"Never mind why I am doing it," replied the Colonel brusquely. "I may tell you more about that some other time. We will say for the present that I am doing it because I wish to. The question is, what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going back with you," asserted Jimmy.

"Shake!" cried the Colonel as he grasped Jimmy's hand. And there was no less cordiality in Jimmy's response.

UPON the evening of his return from Omaha, Colonel Walcott was relating the affair to his wife. "Why is it, Edward," asked she, "that you are devoting so much time and money to that boy? He does not appreciate it."

"Yes, he appreciates it," replied the Colonel, "but it is a hard task for him to hold himself down to study. Sometimes I fear that he never will do it."

"Then why do you persist?"

"Well, I dare say one reason is that I make it a practice to fight a case through to the end, and that is what I shall do in Jimmy's case. I mean to put that boy through high school if it is humanly possible, but the little cuss is making me gray-headed. However, there is another reason—perhaps the main reason—". The Colonel was pacing the floor of his study. He halted in front of an enlarged photograph hanging upon the wall and gazed at it long and earnestly. His wife came over to his side.

"I know what you mean, Edward," said she softly.

JIMMY MADDEN fully intended to carry out his agreement with the Colonel, and during the following two months he applied himself faithfully to his studies under the direction of a tutor and he did succeed, by a narrow margin, in swinging on to his class at the beginning of the school year. Then followed a gradually losing fight. It was the same old story of a forced process with a steadily diminishing force. He lacked the necessary zest

and interest in study. Once more he began to fall behind and his markings commenced to foreshadow another disaster.

"Come up to the courthouse this afternoon," said the Colonel to Jimmy one day. "I am to make an argument in a banking case."

There had been an understanding between them that Jimmy was to be notified whenever Colonel Walcott was to make an important argument. Jimmy never tired listening to the Colonel. Now, there are days when a man is at his best, and this was one of the Colonel's days. His argument was a masterpiece. In the midst of it he happened to glance over toward Jimmy. The boy was leaning forward with flushed face and glowing eyes, absorbing every word of the speech. The picture made a deep impression upon the Colonel. As for Jimmy, it seemed to him that the ability to make a speech like that was the greatest thing in the world. Could he not become a speaker like that?

"How did you learn to make speeches?" asked Jimmy on their way back from the courthouse. "Could you speak like that when you were young?"

"Public speaking," replied the Colonel, "is a matter of practice and preparation."

"Could every man become a good speaker?"

"No, I wouldn't say that. He must have some native talent for it at the start."

"How did you find out that you had talent for it?"

"Well, I wanted to be a speaker. I remember when I was a young fellow I was in a courtroom one day listening to the attorney-general argue a case. He was one of our ablest lawyers. That argument made a great impression upon me. I felt as if I would rather be a lawyer like him than anything else. That is one indication that a young man has ability for a thing—when he really wants to do it."

"How did you get started?" asked Jimmy eagerly.

"We boys organized a debating club in our high school. I well remember my first debate. I forgot my points and had to sit down in confusion. It was a flat failure. But I kept at it. I felt that I could do it. I worked hard preparing my debates, and I finally won out. The basis of a good speech, Jimmy, is facts—principles—well analyzed and prepared. Then along with that there must be practice—practice."

THE following week Jimmy joined the high-school debating club. After a few ineffectual attempts he won a debate. Each time he participated he felt an exhilarating consciousness that he could do better next time. He looked forward to the meetings of the club with keen anticipation. He began to do some serious research work in preparing his debates and often consulted the Colonel, who willingly coached him in the methods of building up a legal argument. Jimmy was an eager pupil. Before the end of his junior year he had become the best debater in the club. It was this passion for debate that led him to take more interest in his school work. If he were ever to become a speaker like Colonel Walcott, he must have a trained mind.

Early in his senior year his teachers awoke to the fact that Jimmy had become a student. Mr. Cartright, the principal, spoke to the Colonel about it.

"The boy has ability," declared Mr. Cartright. "And now that he is applying himself to his studies, he sometimes puts me in mind of your—"

"Yes—yes," interrupted the Colonel brusquely. "Thank you, Cartright. The rascal is beginning to find himself."

One morning in the following June Jimmy walked exultantly into the Colonel's office.

"Well?" said the Colonel inquiringly as he glanced up from his desk.

"This morning I got this letter in the mail," said Jimmy.

Colonel Walcott glanced over the letter, which ran as follows:

Dear Mr. Madden:

It gives me pleasure to inform you that at a meeting of the faculty this evening you were unanimously selected to deliver the Valedictory address at the coming Commencement.

With best wishes,
JOHN M. CARTRIGHT,
Principal.

The Colonel shook Jimmy's hand in congratulation. "Honors usually come when a man works hard and earns them. Now then for some good hard work on that Valedictory."

"That is what I am going to do," asserted Jimmy, "and I am going to work it all out myself."

"Good!" cried the Colonel approvingly. "Put yourself into it. Originality is what gives tang to an address, my boy."

Jimmy kept to his word. He did not even submit the speech to the Colonel for criticism. Colonel Walcott respected his independence, and yet as Commencement day approached, he felt considerable uneasiness. Perhaps he ought to have insisted upon helping the boy!

WHEN the day finally arrived and the Colonel sat beside his wife in the audience awaiting the Valedictory, he was plainly nervous and disturbed.

"What is the matter, Edward?" asked she. "You seem to be fidgety."

"Jimmy's speech," he replied. "What if the boy should fall down!"

"Better wait and see," she counseled.

"Good advice," admitted he.

When Jimmy stepped out upon the platform and began speaking, the Colonel's oratorical instinct immediately sensed the outcome.

"He is going to get them!" he whispered confidently to his wife.

Jimmy did get them. The address was thoughtful, pointed and interesting. His delivery was clear and forceful. There was no mistaking the spontaneity and enthusiasm of the applause which followed. Among the many congratulations which Jimmy afterward received, there was none that touched him so deeply as when the Colonel grasped his hand.

"Fine, sir, fine!" exclaimed the Colonel. "You made me feel proud of you! Now then come up to supper with us. I wish to have a little talk with you."

"Yes sir," agreed Jimmy.

That evening as they sat in the library, the Colonel broached the matter he had in mind.

"You made a creditable record this last year," he began. "Now the question is, what next?"

"Do you mean, what would I like to do?" asked Jimmy.

"Exactly."

Jimmy met the issue squarely.

"I would like to study law," he asserted.

The Colonel's face broke into a delighted smile. "Just what I had in mind," declared he. "But I am glad that it came from you first. How about college?"

"I have thought of that," replied Jimmy. "You know I am twenty-two. I believe, if I could work it, I would like to take one year of general studies up here at the university and then take the three-year course. That would make four years more

of study—if I could only see my way through.”

“You mean financially?”

“Yes sir.”

“I see no difficulty about that. We can keep right on with our present arrangement,—that is entirely satisfactory to me.”

“Colonel Walcott,” exclaimed Jimmy earnestly, “how am I ever going to pay you back all this?”

“That is a very simple matter,” smiled the Colonel. “I shall get my pay in two ways: First, I am getting it in satisfaction. I am reputed to be a fairly prosperous man, Jimmy. I make investments every now and then in bonds and mortgages and real estate, but the particular investment that is giving me the most satisfaction just now is the investment I am making in you. And what is an income for if not to bring satisfaction?”

“You have a way of putting things, Colonel Walcott,” said Jimmy admiringly.

“But I am going to get my pay in another way,” continued the Colonel. “You may remember I told you once about our boy whom we lost. That is his photograph up there on the wall. It was the hardest blow of my life when he died. He was sixteen years old. If he had lived, he would now be just your age. He was a fine boy—a fine boy. It seems strange that he should go—I never could understand—but then, life is full of upsets and over-returns, Jimmy. I had an ambition for my boy. I hoped that he would study law. I expected that just about the time when I should need some one to take a part of the burden of my law practice, my boy would be admitted to the bar.”

COLONEL WALCOTT paused. The mellow rays of the setting sun, filtering through the vines outside the window, fell upon his rugged face and revealed there an expression of sorrow and longing. Jimmy instinctively felt that this glimpse into the secret soul of the Colonel was a matter of sacred confidence and personal regard.

The Colonel roused himself. “That ambition was defeated, Jimmy, but I don’t mind telling you that it was revived. You keep right on doing such work as you have done this past year, and when you are admitted to the bar, you may come in with me and relieve me of part of this load. That is another way that I shall get my pay.”

As the full significance of the Colonel’s statement dawned upon Jimmy, he felt quite unable to respond. He arose and looked out of the window.

“There was another matter I wanted to mention,” said he presently.

“Well?”

“My mother.”

“What about her?”

“I ought to go and see her, and possibly I ought to be taking care of her.”

“I am glad to hear you say that. I have wondered why you never mentioned it before.”

“I guess there were two reasons. One was that I wanted to wait until I had made good. The other was that my mother and I never cared much for each other. I see now that she always had to work too hard.”

“She is your mother,” said the Colonel.

“That’s just it!” cried Jimmy. “And maybe I ought to give up school and go to work—”

“I don’t see why that is necessary. Why not bring your mother here and live together?”

“How could we do that?”

“I will loan the money to you. It will do you good to assume that responsibility. You will find me a lenient creditor. Go ahead and bring your mother here. How much will the trip cost—twenty-five dollars?”

“Just about.”

The Colonel wrote out a check.

“But this calls for one hundred and fifty dollars!” exclaimed Jimmy as he examined it.

“Exactly. I want you to buy her a new dress and keep the balance yourself.”

“May I consider this the first installment of the loan?” asked Jimmy hesitatingly.

“Absolutely not! That is a graduation bonus and it doesn’t begin to pay for the satisfaction you have given me today. Now, then, bring your mother back with you.”

THE Colonel stood at the window watching Jimmy until he disappeared down the street. He then stepped over and gazed for a moment at the photograph upon the wall; then, seating himself at the window, he fell into a reverie. Upon his face there was a touch of sadness, but this was over-cast by a certain grim expression of triumph such as one will see upon the face of an experienced lawyer who has just won a big case.

The Ironmaster of Chian Fu



H. Bedford-Jones

JIM HANEKY had no excuses to offer. He preserved a rather dogged attitude, as though he expected none of us to believe him. And none of us believed him. I was the only exception, because I had known Jim in China and I knew that he told the truth.

We all looked at the vase while Jim Hanecy told how he got hold of it in Chian Fu, and then we glanced at each other, most of us smiling. I asked permission to photograph the vase, which of course Jim granted at once. And yet even I found it hard to credit his tale.

"How you got the vase," I said, when the others had gone and we were alone with our pipes and that magnificent vase, "is really incredible; you can't expect people to believe it, Jim. You've had no end of adventures in China, you've hunted works of art there for years—but you never got anything half so wonderful as this."

"That's true," said Hanecy sulkily. "I didn't believe it myself until I had gotten through the customs with the piece."

"But that," I said, "is only an incident—a trivial affair. The big thing is that story about Sung Li and the iron workers. There, my friend, you become a Munchausen! My heavens, Jim—that story is an extravaganza on business!"

"I know it," he answered. "I don't give a damn if you believe it or not. It's true, and I saw it happen—every incident of the whole blamed affair! I was there when the men made their demands, and I was with Sung Li the whole time. Man, it didn't seem so cursed wonderful at the moment, the way he took that Bolshevik gang in hand and curried 'em down! Not until afterward; not until I thought it over and got things straightened out. Little things. The things I told you chaps. It's all a big story, but the biggest part of it is the vase."

"The biggest part," I said, "is about the iron works. That's a news story, Jim! Was it ever put into print?"

He shook his head.

HANEKY made a business of finding objects of art in China and getting them out of the country into America, where curio dealers and collectors bought them from him. Not at fabulous prices, either. It's when the dealers sell again to the millionaires that the prices get fabulous.

Jim was a ruthless sort of person. He believed in efficiency, and he practiced it very religiously. He had to. Ask the buyers how easy it is to buy objects of art in China—without getting stung—and how easy it is to get them into America!

One day Jim heard that there was a wonderful vase up in the hills at Chian Fu. He believed it. There was nothing at Chian Fu except a small iron works, owned and managed by an old mandarin named Sung Li, who was the only man of prominence in the place. Jim had met the old mandarin in other days, and knew that he was likely to keep a few beautiful things about him, to gaze upon and enjoy daily. That is the Chinese way.

Jim got a Peking cart, which is a box on wheels, and later got a mule, and finally climbed into Chian Fu along the hill trail. He found an extensive and rather old-fashioned iron works, a lot of workmen's cottages, a fine market place where country folk brought in produce, and the mandarin's house flanking the little old temple.

Sung Li welcomed him like a long-lost brother and made him at home. Jim was a bit surprised to see that all the workmen seemed to be idling about the village, and that the works appeared lifeless, but he made no comment on these things. Also, he observed that Sung Li was, under the surface of calm politeness, worried and nervous. As etiquette forbade disturbing a guest with such things, the mandarin made no reference to business troubles.

Immediately after dinner that evening, however, Sung Li had to come to the point.

"My regret," he said, "is intense and deep that so honored a guest and so valued a friend must be spoken to upon matters of unworthy business—matters of so small import that merely to mention them is an insult!"

"On the contrary," said Jim gravely, "they would be of great interest to me, Sung Li! I see that the works are shut down."

"They are," agreed the mandarin. "The workmen have been educated of late. They have received ambassadors from other lands. They have made great demands upon me. Their leaders are to call upon me this evening."

It appeared that two of his best workmen had recently come back from foreign parts—one from the Russian border, the other from France, whither they had been called by the war. They had returned with the praiseworthy intention of educating their fellow workmen.

A VERY thorough campaign of Bolshevik propaganda had been carried on. Not by that name, but it amounted

to the same thing. The two learned and traveled leaders had been elected to manage the iron works; Sung Li had been calmly ordered to give his workers fifty per cent of his profits, and to admit them to an equal voice in the conduct of the business. Also, he was told to build new cottages to house his workers.

Jim Hanecy was not sure which to admire most—the effrontery of these demands, or the effrontery of Sung Li. The mandarin paid a wage-scale according to old Chinese customs, and it was about the lowest scale left in China. He owned the whole works himself, skinned the workmen by means of his own shops, ran the temple himself and put the profits of that enterprise in his own pocket, and paid himself enormous dividends.

Taken by and large, Sung Li was the most perfect example extant of the capitalist tyrant. Since the establishment of the republic, he had paid Peking no taxes, and Peking was helpless to collect payment. He had been mandarin of the district under the empire, and he remained mandarin of the district now.

"Why don't you break the strike—call in soldiers?" suggested Hanecy.

"I maintain my own soldiers—and they have joined the strikers. I have no desire to let my business pass into Japanese hands, so I cannot well afford to appeal to Peking."

Sung Li clapped his hands softly, and the servant appeared, refilling the tiny cups of tea. In deference to his visitor, Sung Li did not follow the old tea-ceremony; he knew that Jim Hanecy wanted to drink his tea while it was hot, not after they were through talking.

But now the mandarin went on to pay his guest the finest compliment Jim Hanecy had received in China.

"I know much of you and your methods," said Sung Li blandly, "and I admire them. You are called a hard man; you are efficient; you wrong no one, but you do not believe in standing any foolishness. You are a man after my own image. Therefore I shall impose upon your friendship to the extent of asking you to be present at the meeting tonight, if it will not too greatly bore you."

"I'd be delighted," said Jim, truthfully. "You have some scheme to settle affairs?"

"Yes," said the mandarin, and smiled.

Jim Hanecy observed the face of his host, and reflected that he might have an

interesting evening. Sung Li was old, but his age could not be told from his features. They were high-boned, smooth with much smiling, and the eyes were hard and keen, like black obsidian. A very dominant face, particularly for a son of T'ang, very deep with half-guessed funds of resolution and implacable strength; much, in fact, like the iron he made and sold.

"I am accountable to no one," pursued Sung Li softly. "I rule this district, and it is well ruled. If I choose to put into everyday practice the principles of abstract justice, that is my own affair entirely! Only my own soul, my own brain, can command my actions. What do you do in your country, my friend, when workmen make such demands as these?"

Jim Hanecy frowned. "Blessed if I know, Sung Li! According to all accounts, compromise and surrender are the watchwords. I've often wished I were a business man back home. Do you know, I sometimes would like to see every working person in the country sweating blood so hard that they'd be glad to get a job at any price—"

The mandarin smiled politely but incredulously.

"Surrender?" he said. "But in a case such as this, where everything is my own property?"

"Surrender," repeated Jim. "If you didn't, they'd get you! The canal workers would refuse to handle your barges; the *mafus* would refuse to load their mules with your iron; the workmen of your customers would strike also until their masters dealt no longer with you. You'd be ruled by a secret terror night and day, never knowing what demands would next be made upon you—"

"Ah, but that is not business!" said Sung Li positively. "That is highway robbery. Please tell me if you think my position correct: Since I own the land, the works, the iron, the machines, I alone have the right to manage my business. Eh?"

"Theoretically, it's correct—"

"And anyone who wishes to rob me of my property, is a bandit, an enemy?"

"Yes, theoretically. But that's been thrashed out in my country, Sung Li; capital has abandoned that standpoint long ago."

"I do not abandon it," said the other complacently. "I believe in business as it ought to be. This is not your country; it is mine, thanks to the gods! Because you are the sort of man you are, you will ap-

preciate my handling of this matter; a poor and imperfect handling, but the best I can devise. Labor produces for me, and I pay labor for its work; all else is robbery."

Hanecy shrugged his shoulders. It was useless to attempt to make this man understand.

JIM HANECY heard and viewed the meeting from a side room, screened by a carven lattice. When he entered the room, he saw the pomegranate vase in front of him, and it nearly destroyed all his interest in capital and labor. Small wonder, indeed!

It was shaped like a pomegranate, a foot high. Against a sky-blue ground, whose greenish tinge indicated the Kang-hsi rather than the Chien-lung period, were pomegranate trees, leaves, flowers and fruit, all in natural colors; all, moreover, raised a good half inch from the surface of the bowl—that is, hammered out from the bronze, then inlaid with cloisonné enamel. It was this that made the vase extremely rare and wonderful. It might not bring much money, but as a work of art it was unique, supreme, a triumph!

Jim fell in love with it at first sight. It was an artist's vision created, an inspiration come true. He knew he could never buy this from the mandarin, who would have an artist's affection for it. The thing was beyond price. Suddenly he became aware of voices from the room adjoining, and turned to the lattice.

Sung Li sat in his curved, lacquered mandarin's arm-chair, smoking a great pipe of jade and brass. It drew the eye, that pipe. Sung Li puffed at it now and then—short little puffs, quickly expelled, as though he did not enjoy it particularly. A little stand beside him held his tobacco, also a painted oil lamp from which to light his pipe.

The mandarin was dressed in his robes of honor and appeared perfectly composed. Before him were ranged ten men, workmen, clad in their blue clothes. Eight of these men were rather sheepish, dogged, sullen; the two who had traveled afar were brazenly cool and discourteous.

These two were the spokesmen. They presented their demands in blunt phrases, saying without hesitation that a new day was dawning, that working men were going to run the industries of the country, and that the mandarin must be content to sit back and see the actual laborers get the profit on what they produced. It was sur-

prisingly occidental, and reminded Hanecy very much of the newspaper reports of conferences between capital and striking labor. At least, this side of it did.

Sung Li listened to it all very patiently, his glittering black eyes fastened upon the ten men before him. In his immobility was something terrible and frightful. It rendered the visitors uneasy, and they sought to look away. But there was nothing else for them to look at. The rugs had been taken from the floor. The two old brown paintings had been taken from the walls. The porcelains had been taken from their carven pedestals. There was just the old mandarin, smoking his pipe and listening impassively to them—and looking at them all the while. They gazed hungrily at the big pipe of jade and brass.

THE two spokesmen ended their tirade and paused for an answer.

"I have heard you," said Sung Li. "I am speaking to you, my children, not as the mandarin, but as the business man, the man of affairs. You understand?"

They understood, and said so mutteringly.

"There is no use in telling you that you cannot run my business," he pursued calmly, "or in saying that you have not the ability. You believe that you have the ability?"

They so believed, and affirmed the fact.

"I do not agree with you," he said placidly. "But, if I refused your demands, you would either remain away from work, or you would take over my iron plant and run it in spite of me, I suppose?"

"Certainly," said one of the two educated yellow men. "You are the law here, but we are the majority. You are alone, helpless and impotent. We shall take over the place and run it for our own benefit. For years we have been your slaves; now we shall change all this and become our own masters."

"I see," said Sung Li, quite unruffled, unmoved by the half concealed threats.

The mandarin laid down his pipe and rose.

"Be pleased to wait," he said calmly, "until I shall have procured my books and the private memoranda concerning the business. Be seated, and I will have you served with wine and tea."

He clapped his hands softly, and two servants appeared with trays. He bowed to the ten visitors, and turned to the near-

est door. The ten workmen laughed exultantly, eagerly.

Jim Hanecy was still looking through the lattice at the ten workmen guzzling their hot spiced wine, when he felt a touch on the shoulder and turned to see Sung Li at his elbow, noiseless, smiling gently. Sung Li crooked his finger, and Jim followed him, very quietly, from the room.

Outside, they stood for a moment in the courtyard.

"I am glad you came," said the mandarin placidly, blinking at the quiet night sky and the silvern moonlight. "Your presence will guarantee the success of my scheme. Otherwise, it would be something of a gamble. You see, I must save my face, as the common folk say."

Hanecy nodded, understanding only the last remark. After those ten men had come into the mandarin's house and talked to him like lords, his "face" was in a bad way. Jim gathered that Sung Li cared a good deal for his dignity.

"You're not going to leave 'em there?" he asked.

"They are quite safe," and the mandarin smiled. "They walked into my house and held me up—demanded all that I owned at the point of a pistol! Now they are quite certain that I have surrendered."

HE paused for a moment, blinking at the walls. The entrance to the bungalow was built in Chinese fashion, a short inner wall built across the gateway, so that devils, which can only move in a straight line, would be unable to enter.

"You see," he explained gently, "at the second cup of wine they will all sit in my chair, one by one, and smoke my pipe—it is a very nice pipe, and was given me long ago by Lao Tzu Tsung—the Glorious Old Ancestor! I know them, the swine! They will all want to smoke that pipe."

Jim Hanecy felt an unaccountable pricking at the name Tzu-Hsi. The old dowager empress has been long dead, and yet, like a presence invisible, her spirit seems to linger in the mists of the Chinese hills. Men say that she returns nightly from the dead to seek her familiar god, the famous pearl Buddha which was lost when the Summer Palace was sacked. Hanecy knew, however, that her spirit still lingered in the land—lingered by intangible paths and in such inaccessible places as the hearts of men. He wondered about that pipe.

"We will go outside and view the workmen," said Sung Li, a silky laugh peeping from his tones. "May I take your arm? I am an old man, and feeble—"

"But the workmen?" repeated Jim, offering his arm. "They are waiting? They know that their leaders are in conference with you?"

"Oh, yes—they know, and they are waiting! Come."

THE two men walked, arm in arm, out into the moonlit area in front of the mandarin's house and compound.

Upon the ground in front of them, stretching far away, was a great black mass; a silent, motionless mass dotted irregularly with white shapes, exactly like the rounded white graves with horseshoe-shaped fronts in the Tali cemetery. That mass impressed Jim Hanecy weirdly until, as his eyes became focused to the moonlight, he perceived that it was made up of men—the workmen, squatting there in hundreds, waiting for the return of their leaders.

A low hum of interested curiosity swept the mass when they saw Hanecy thus arm in arm with the mandarin. As for Sung Li, he paid them no more heed than if they had been stones. He advanced with Hanecy to within a dozen feet of the nearest men, talking idly the while, then paused and swept his arm out toward the high smokestacks of the iron foundries.

"There it is, my friend," he said calmly, lifting his voice, perhaps so that it might pierce distinctly to each one of the hundreds squatting before him. He never glanced at them, ignoring them utterly. "To-morrow I will take you through the place, and you can see if it is suited to your needs."

Jim Hanecy had absolutely no idea what was expected from him, but he made a stab in the dark which seemed to thrust home very well.

"Those cottages will not do for my men," he observed. "I noticed them when I arrived this afternoon, your excellency. They are too small."

Sung Li chuckled deep in his throat, but repressed his mirth.

"Exactly," he assented. "I have realized for some time that they were small and unworthy even of my workmen—who, the gods know, are swine and brethren of turtles! Some months ago I ordered cement, which is now on the way here, with

workmen skilled in its use; and I have plans for the erection of neat stone cottages in place of these structures."

"That will do very well," said Hanecy, nodding. The pale, motionless faces there in the flooding moonlight were all fastened upon him. He felt rather uneasy. "What will become of your workmen, then?"

The mandarin laughed, and the laugh was very silky, very terrible in its scorn.

"They are not workmen, my friend! They are robbers and thieves. If you do buy the place, I would suggest that your foreign soldiers shoot one in every ten of these robbers, and turn the others out into the hills. Let them starve, for all I care! Put your workmen in their places, and you will have much better results."

At this, another low hum passed through the serried mass of squatting men. It was not speech. It was as though each man squatting there, at hearing those words, had uttered a low moan in his throat—or a low growl.

"As for my soldiers," said the mandarin placidly, "you had better give each of them a hundred lashes, and, if they survive, hang them. They are worse than the robbers."

JIM HANEKY felt frankly afraid, and he is about as impervious to fear as a rhinoceros. If Sung Li had come out here and told his workmen that he intended to sell the works and cast them adrift, the chances were that they would have mobbed him; as he said, it was a gamble. But better than that, he had brought Jim Hanecy, a foreigner, out in front of them and was calmly discussing the sale of the plant as an accomplished purpose.

There was nothing to prevent the hundreds of workmen from coming forward and tearing asunder the two who stood there in the moonlight and ignored them. Jim Hanecy fully expected it to happen, and kept his hand near his automatic. He saw the glint of rifle barrels here and there, and knew that the soldiers were among the squatting mass.

To Hanecy, the thing seemed very futile, a puerile game of bluff—and he knew that bluff does not work with a Chinaman. The mandarin was impotent, and every man of those hundreds realized the fact. He had not a soldier to aid him.

A moment later, however, he began to dimly perceive that the ironmaster of Chien Fu was not so puerile after all. Out of the squatting mass lifted a voice, a wail-

ing, questioning voice that was quite respectful.

"Honorable master, where are Ng Far and Lung, and our eight brethren?"

Sung Li entirely ignored the question, and went on to discuss hypothetical plans for turning over the iron works to foreign control. His men, he stated, had become robbers and thieves and had rebelled against him; therefore, the easiest way would be for him to leave the place and sell everything to the foreigners. Let the sons of turtles starve!

"Honorable master," lifted another voice, "did not Ng Far and Lung, and our eight brethren talk with you?"

The mandarin seemed to hear the question for the first time. He turned, with a swish of his silken robes, and allowed his gaze to sweep the immobile ranks of men with a scornful pride. His voice, when he answered, was filled with an intolerable sting.

"Oh, thieves and brethren of robbers!" he said coldly. "Well do ye name those men your brethren! Yes, they came and they talked, and this friend of mine heard all that they said! They stood before me, and they talked."

There was something ominous in his voice, something that made Hanecy's spine prickle again. After a slight silence, another voice lifted from the mass, and it quavered as though in great anger—or fear.

"When will they return to us, honorable master?"

Sung Li swept the serried ranks with his gaze, and laughed. That laugh was an insult. It was a deadly laugh, cold and vey disdainful—like a slap in the face.

"After talking to me as they talked," he said, "do you think that they will return? They will not return, until my servants throw their bodies on the dungheap! Come, my friend," and he took Hanecy's arm again. "Let us go back inside and see if the place has been cleansed of the robbers."

The two walked back to the gate. At each instant, Hanecy expected to hear the bark of a rifle; at each instant, he expected a knife or a bullet in the back. Again that low hum swept through the squatting mass of men. He itched to look around, to see if the hundreds were rising and hurling themselves forward in a frenzied mass—but the cool complacency of Sung Li shamed him into stalking ahead impassively.

When they had gained the gate, the mandarin halted. Hanecy realized that cold sweat was trickling through his hair. Two of the servants appeared coming around the end of the inner wall, carrying something between them. It was the body of one of the ten leaders.

"Throw the carrion on the dungheap outside," said Sung Li, lifting his voice so that it carried through the night to the mass of workmen. "Come inside, my friend. I regret that this shameful thing should have marred the happiness of your visit."

THE two had barely returned to the mandarin's reception room, when one of the servants hastily announced that the soldiers were at the gate, asking for an interview with Sung Li.

"Let them wait," said the mandarin. "Make the room as it was before. When it is done, bring us wine—and admit the thieves."

Jim Hanecy asked no questions—he saw that Sung Li was on something of a strain, and forebore to interrupt.

There was no sign of the ten leaders in the room, or of what had happened to them. Only, the big jade and brass pipe lay on the floor, as though it had fallen. Sung Li carefully picked it up and put it on the little stand. Then he seated himself in his big curved chair.

The servants brought another chair for Jim Hanecy, and a tray of cakes and hot wine. Then they brought in rugs, pictures, porcelains again, and finally the wonderful pomegranate vase. The room was restored to its pristine luxury, to the luxury and magnificence which befitted a mandarin and an artist.

Then the soldiers were admitted.

To the amazement of Hanecy, they came into the room, as many as could enter, while the rest waited outside, and prostrated themselves toward the seated figure of Sung Li. One of them, evidently chosen as spokesman, whined out his speech.

"Honorable master, wearer of the dragon robe, guardian of lives and happiness, pardon your unworthy servants! It is the prayer of us all, and of your worthless laborers, that you will punish us as we deserve for our impiety, but that you will not sell the place to foreigners and doom us all to starvation and death."

Sung Li looked at them from his implacable eyes of obsidian, black as night. Then he named six names.

"Those six," he said coldly, "are, with the ten who were here, leaders of the robbers and thieves. I have punished those who dared to enter my house with threats of robbery. If you are repentant and desire pardon, go out and seize those six others, and shoot them. Let all the bodies be collected and displayed in the market place, with placards naming them as robbers and thieves. When this is done, ask for pardon."

The soldiers withdrew. Hanecy looked at Sung Li, half affrightedly.

"You're pushing 'em too far," he muttered.

The mandarin, smiling, lifted his hand. "Wait! Listen!"

The two men listened. A moment of long silence passed; then another. Sung Li reached out to the tray and sipped a little wine. His long yellow fingers were trembling very slightly; it was the only sign of discomposure that he gave.

Then, suddenly, a ragged volley of shots broke the night outside.

"It is done!" Sung Li relaxed in his chair with the abruptness of a broken wire. His face was ashen. He gulped at his wine, regardless of courtesy. "By the gods, it is done! They will be back presently, on their knees. Well, my friend! Can they handle robbers in this fashion in your country?"

Hanecy swore under his breath.

"No," he said. His eyes lifted to the pomegranate vase, and he attempted feebly to change the subject.

"That vase," he said hoarsely. "It's a wonderful thing, Sung Li! I was looking at it in the other room. It's the most beautiful piece of cloisonné I've ever seen; for sheer beauty of line and color and proportion, it's unique!"

Sung Li nodded, and a smile crept to his lips, which were regaining their color.

"I think so myself," he said calmly. "I shall have it suitably packed for you, and you shall take it away as a gift. When you get to your own country, show it to those

who rule industry, and tell them how the ironmaster of Chian Fu deals with robbers. Perhaps they will be glad to have the prescription."

JIM HANECY looked at me over his pipe. "That's how I got the vase," he said. "You know why he gave it? Because I had happened to fall in with his little scheme, in what I said out there in the moonlight. Sheer luck, that's all. He thought I was a deep and brainy guy, working in with him; and I was just a blundering fool. Man, I can't ever sell that vase! It—it's the most beautiful thing—"

I smiled, and spoke lightly.

"Then I suppose you'll pack it up, and trot around the country showing it to all the steel magnates and telling them about Sung Li and his methods of handling—"

Hanecy looked at me again, a red flush creeping dully into his cheeks.

"Don't be a damned fool," he said curtly.

"I'm not. But you'll have to explain the most vital point, which so far you've failed to do. How did your mandarin deal with the deputation of ten? What did he do to 'em?"

"He let them smoke that pipe," said Hanecy. "It was quite a pipe, darned if it wasn't! If you didn't smoke it just so, if you smoked it like any ordinary Chinese pipe, you got a bit of something on your tongue from an invisible aperture. How the devil do I know what it was? Nicotine, perhaps; the Chinese knew long before we did that a drop of pure nicotine kills instantly. It was a big pipe, you know—a big affair of jade and brass—and probably the hot wine was all doped—"

"Then," I put in, "the whole thing was really luck! It was all a gamble whether they'd smoke that pipe and play at being mandarins—"

Hanecy looked at me in scorn.

"Luck!" he snorted. "Old Sung Li knew the swine, didn't he? Luck—hell!"

"TEARS OF THE POPPY," that thrilling novelette by Lemuel Lawrence De Bra which appeared some months ago in **THE BLUE BOOK**, evoked so much enthusiasm among our readers that we suggested to Mr. De Bra the possibility of his writing a sequel. The idea appealed very strongly to him, and as a result we are able to offer you in our next issue "Ashes of Dreams," a fascinating story of San Francisco's Chinatown that even surpasses the former story in its unusual plot, brilliant color and deep interest. Watch for it in the next, the May, number of **THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE**.

Mack Mason Plays Romeo



Chester T.
Crowell

“SENATOR,” protests Mack Mason to Senator Logwood in this typical Chester Crowell story,—“Senator, the minute I give them a ring, they up and kiss me.” And he reports some extraordinary adventures with the deadline sex.

“**S**O you gentlemen are making the circuit in your cars!” said Senator Robert Culpepper Logwood in his most genial manner. “Well, be seated, and may I suggest that some one shuffle a blue deck while I count out these chips? Thank you. How the times change! To think that I should live to see a party of attorneys traveling overland in their automobiles from county seat to county seat! I well remember when we used to travel overland on horseback and on the mail hacks. Often we have appeared in the courtroom a trifle red-eyed after a long session of seeking the third ace and tried some unfortunate citizen who had been arrested for gambling. In those days, however, the judge was usually the banker of the game. I see the judge is not with you gentlemen tonight. The reformers are ruining this country. I wish Mack Mason were with us this evening. He dearly loves to turn the pasteboards, but some unfortunate change has come over him lately. I find him much in the company of young women hereabouts. I hope he is too sensible for them to turn his head.”

The group was assembled in Senator

Logwood’s room in the Grand Central Hotel of Zephyr, State of Mesquite, whither Senator Logwood had gone to attend to the legal end of Mack Mason’s oil operations.

“**I**t grieves me to be forced to ask a gentleman to draw the shade upon a mere friendly game of poker; but we must bow to the wind and hope for an end of the storm. This would not have been necessary in the old days when we made our camp on the open prairies and looked at the hole card by the light of a burning log. With all due respect to you young men, we had some mighty legal minds in those days. Now you have automobiles and court-stenographers. We used to draw up a statement of facts with very little difficulty before there were stenographers, and I will show you some judges of appellate courts who will tell you that we made much better and briefer statements of facts than the stenographer furnishes. We knew our cases better.

“If you gentlemen will count your chips now; the blue ones are dollars, reds four bits and whites two bits. I’ll not play in the first hand. It gives me bad luck. I’m

not superstitious, but it has been my observation during a quarter of a century that if I play in the first hand I win the first pot and lose the next thirteen. I'll take off my clothes. I'm not going out again tonight, and I like to play in my underwear. Comfortable, and it gives me luck. Ever play strip-poker? It's a great game.

"I well remember one night we were playing at Chief Justice Smoot's home and he had the usual luck of the host, losing consistently; first we took off his necktie, then his collar and last of all his hat. He kept his hat even after his underwear was gone. A funny spectacle he was sitting there in birthday attire except for a broad black felt hat set at a rakish angle to shade his eyes. Finally he lost the hat also and then called for another stack of chips. Of course he wasn't entitled to them, but most of us had cases pending before the old gentleman so we let him have another stack; and when he lost those, some of the gentlemen present were in favor of cutting off his beard. We argued the matter until morning, citing authorities to determine whether a beard was merely an article of adornment which could be classed as apparel in such a contest or whether the beard was a part of the judge's person. It was a gay night."

Senator Logwood smiled reminiscently as he removed his shoes and then lighted a cigarette while the dealer turned the cards. His audience waited patiently for him to conclude the story, and when he seemed to have no intention of doing so, one of the guests asked: "Well, Senator, what was the ruling?"

"I DO not now recall," Senator Logwood replied. "We were drinking some excellent corn-whisky made in the piny woods and never desecrated by a revenue stamp. I went to sleep while an eloquent and profound argument was being made on the guarantees of the Bill of Rights with special reference to a man's person. I have always regretted that I missed some of that argument. It showed a profound understanding of the fundamentals. When next day I saw the justice, however, he was in full possession of his beard."

Senator Logwood's guests smiled. A moment later he took his seat, looked at his hole card, and remarked: "If I get the mate to what I've got in the hole, I'll send home for the bedstead and the hall clock.

In the meantime I will just raise this pot six bits." This announcement was greeted with hearty laughter. The next card that fell to Senator Logwood was an ace. He silently swept all the chips in front of him into the pot. The other players smiled and turned over their cards. Senator Logwood raked in the pot and then turned over his hole card, which was a four-spot.

"That is the only way I know to play a four-spot in the hole," he said. "If you don't pretend it is an ace, you might as well throw it away."

While the cards were being shuffled, there was a loud knock at the door, and a gruff voice said: "Open that door."

"The sheriff!" gasped Senator Logwood's guests in unison.

"I am in bed," Senator Logwood yelled, "but I will open the door. Just a moment till I put on my bedroom slippers. —Now, gentlemen," he whispered to his guests, "that rope hanging at the head of my bed is the fire escape. It reaches to the ground."

His guests lost no time. In less than a minute, all of them were on their way down. Senator Logwood waited until he could draw up the rope and close the window. In the meantime the sheriff resumed pounding on the door. Just as Senator Logwood replaced the rope on the wooden hook above his bed, the sheriff placed his shoulder against the pine door and broke it. He fell against Senator Logwood as he tumbled in.

"You're late," calmly asserted Senator Logwood. "The boys that were playing poker jumped out the window. I guess they are all gone now. You will have to pardon a very sleepy old man." Senator Logwood took off his slippers and tumbled into bed. The sheriff rushed out the door and down the hall. As soon as he was gone, Senator Logwood rose and counted each stack of chips, making a notation on the cuff of his shirt for each stack and then throwing the chips into the small wood stove. This business concluded, he dressed and went downstairs. The sheriff was examining the wall of the hotel, trying to evolve a theory as to how the gamblers had climbed down.

"Could you identify them?" asked the sheriff.

"I don't know," replied Senator Logwood. "I am a very sound sleeper and they were all strangers to me. I had never met them until today."

"Nervy thing to do, come into a man's room and start a poker game," muttered the sheriff.

"Well, boys will be boys," replied Senator Logwood. "You've given them a good scare. I reckon they won't do it again."

"We'll go upstairs and take another look at the room. There might be a list of the names or something about the chips that would identify them," said the sheriff.

"That's a good idea," Senator Logwood heartily agreed, and he led the way.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" exclaimed the sheriff, as he turned on the electric light in the room. "One of them's been back here and taken the chips. I'm sure there were chips on that table. Didn't you see chips on the table, Senator?"

"I thought there were chips on the table," said Senator Logwood, "but both of us were excited."

"I'll go down and see which men are not in their rooms. That may furnish a clue," said the sheriff.

"I HADN'T thought of that," declared Senator Logwood. He led the way to the key-rack with the utmost confidence because he had warned the men to bring their keys with them before the game started. The sheriff was baffled again.

"Don't make much difference," he said, as he examined the empty key-rack. "Nothing but a sociable game, anyway."

"That's all," said Senator Logwood.

"Good night," said the sheriff. "If they bother you again, just lay low and get a good look at them and tell me about it next day."

"Yes, that's the best way to get them," agreed Senator Logwood.

He walked out onto a small side-porch with the intention of seeing if any of the poker-players were hovering there waiting a signal that it was safe to return. On a rustic seat with their backs to the open door were Mack Mason and a young woman whose generous gift of blond hair and position in the O. K. Eating House identified her to Senator Logwood as "The Yellow-headed Cashier."

Her name was Maybelle Smythe. Senator Logwood had seen the signature on a number of her notes to Mack Mason; but the spelling puzzled him, so he usually identified her as "The Yellow-headed Cashier." They were too busy with their own conversation to take much interest in anything else and they did not hear

Senator Logwood. He was still wearing his bedroom slippers. It was his intention to warn Mack Mason of the dangers of the cool night air, but the first words he heard cut short his train of thought.

"If you'll give me a nice diamond ring, you can have a kiss," Maybelle was saying. Evidently Mack Mason had been begging.

"Got it right here," Mason replied. He disentangled one arm. Both of them had been around Maybelle's ample waist. Senator Logwood looked and listened aghast as Mack Mason reached into his vest pocket and drew forth the small plush box containing the ring. He opened the box and placed the ring on the finger which Maybelle held poised. It was the third finger of the left hand.

"It don't fit, darling," said Maybelle. "You ought to have asked me the size."

"Well, but I get the kiss, don't I?" Mack Mason asked in alarm. For answer Maybelle placed both her arms around Mack Mason's neck. Senator Logwood waited patiently for the kiss to come to a close but finally lost hope and cleared his throat noisily. Mack Mason jumped to his feet. Maybelle nearly fell off the seat. She had been clinging to Mason as tightly as she could hold him. The sight of Senator Logwood seemed to add to Mack Mason's embarrassment instead of relieving him. He tried to think of something to say, but all he succeeded in doing was to put his right foot down on his left foot and then grab a wooden pillar of the little gallery to keep from falling down.

"Well, we're engaged," said Maybelle as if answering some accusation. Senator Logwood had not said a word. Mack Mason looked at her in astonishment.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," Senator Logwood said calmly, "but I need Mr. Mason very much. I am at work on a very difficult problem. This night air is rather cool. Hadn't you noticed it?"

"No, I'm hot," Mack Mason asserted.

"Well, if it's business, I'll say good night," Maybelle cooed. She extended her hand. Mack Mason shook it heartily.

Senator Logwood bowed in his most courtly manner, and Maybelle departed.

AS Mack Mason and his old friend walked through the hall, three men on tiptoes disappeared into their several rooms. They had evidently come in through the back way.

"Better come to my room, I reckon," said Mack Mason. "You got a poker game, aint you, Senator?"

"We broke up early," said Senator Logwood. "You may come to my room." They entered and turned on the light. Mack Mason sprawled out in the one rocking-chair while Senator Logwood lighted a cigarette. There was a baffling smile of satisfaction on Mack Mason's face. It caused Senator Logwood to struggle for the proper beginning. He never did decide what he wanted to say. He was thinking the matter over when he discovered to his astonishment that he was thinking aloud.

"MAYBE the ring was large for the yellow-headed cashier because you bought it for Gussie," Senator Logwood heard himself say. Mack Mason slapped his knee and laughed heartily.

"You done guessed it, Senator," he roared. "This here was an accident. I aint no more engaged to that Maybelle darling than you are, Senator. I aint engaged to none of them."

"Isn't that nice!" said Senator Logwood with biting sarcasm. "You asked the young lady for a kiss. Quite properly she replied that you could have one when you placed a diamond engagement-ring on the third finger of her left hand. You obligingly complied with your part of the contract, and she gave you the kiss. And now you tell me you are not engaged. That isn't what she thinks."

"To be engaged, don't you have to ask a girl to marry you?" Mack Mason demanded, confident of a sound argument.

"And not only that," continued Senator Logwood, ignoring his friend's question, "but the young lady has a witness. It is needless for me to add that she has a witness whose Southern traditions of chivalry would never permit him to commit perjury to save a heedless scoundrel who goes merrily up and down the four blocks of Main Street of this thriving village wrecking the hearts of hard-working girls who—"

"Where do you get all that?" demanded Mack Mason. "I aint on trial—yet." He laughed again.

"No, but you are likely to be, and if the young lady needs an attorney, she can get one whom merchant princes have been proud to retain," asserted Senator Logwood.

"I've already retained you," asserted Mack Mason, and he slapped his knee again.

"Let us forget the nonsense for a moment," suggested Senator Logwood earnestly. "Tell me briefly and honestly just what is the status of your relations with Gussie. I seem to have a fairly good idea of how you are getting along with the yellow-headed cashier."

"Senator, how long was you standing there?" Mason asked.

"Just a moment," said Senator Logwood, "before the kiss began. I was there a couple of hours during the course of the kiss. I was asleep in my room—or I mean I was playing poker in my room when we were all interrupted by your yelling for a kiss down here on the gallery. The noise was so fearful that it broke up the game and I came down here to get you."

"I must be in love with that girl!" Mack Mason exclaimed. "Senator, I'm in a fix. I'm in love with three girls, and if I'm engaged to Maybelle, I'm engaged to all of them. I'm going to have to move from here."

"The unfortunate part of it is that you cannot move your oil-well nor the lands upon which you hold leases. Do you follow me? If you are not careful you will be supporting three broken-hearted women and still be without a wife."

"Well," drawled Mason. "That wouldn't be so bad, Senator. I can afford it." Senator Logwood dropped his cigarette. He slowly opened his monogrammed case and drew out another.

"Now tell me about Gussie," he ordered. Mack Mason smiled as though he were going to enjoy the recital. Senator Logwood looked at him reprovingly as he listened.

"Gussie says to me just after she come here to buy leases for some Eastern capitalists that she is crazy about oil men. And I up and tell her, Senator, that I'm a oil man—which I am now. That started us off fine, and we went to the Happy Hour picture show nearly every evening. I'd hold my hat in my lap, and sometimes she'd put her hand under my hat just playful-like, Senator, and hold my hand. Well, I guess I can stand more of that than any living human, Senator. I'm a hog for that kind of treatment. The girls aint never paid no attention to me. And then she wanted to show me the beauties of this here prairie-dog country and we

walked out in the dust. Senator, I thought I'd never get my feet white again. I used all the soap—"

"You may omit the nonessentials," snapped Senator Logwood.

"Well, Senator, one day we walked by the new cottage that the president of the Million a Minute Production Company is building, and she said it would be nice if we had a cottage like that. And I told her the house I was going to have would be like the one we saw in the moving picture with the dining-room in a glass cage and flowers all around it and no flies or mosquitoes. And then she began to put paper on the walls and lace curtains all around and a swimming-tank out in left field with a high brick wall around it so as to make the neighbors sore. Senator, she just moved right into my house."

"And you met her at the front door with a diamond ring," Senator Logwood interrupted.

"Well, she said she had to have a ring," Mack Mason admitted, "so I bought her a ring; but I got tangled up with Maybelle this evening, and damn my hide if I didn't go and give her the ring, and now I've got to get another one before Gussie finds out about it. Maybe I can get that ring back from Maybelle in the morning and get one that fits her—"

"Of course that would be a very simple matter," growled Senator Logwood. "Well, let's get on. How about Christine?"

"Well, I reckon Christine aint worrying much about getting married," said Mack Mason. "She said she wouldn't be married nowhere but in a big brick church with a tent from the curbstone to the front door and cut flowers all over the floor with a crew of kids hired to chuck 'em there. And she wont be married no time but in June, and she don't aim to be married this coming June on account of something, I don't remember what. I wasn't paying much attention. She smacks her tongue against the roof of her mouth when she talks, Senator, and I was a-watching to see how she did it and I lost some of the story."

"Yes, you usually seem to miss very important parts of these proceedings," growled Senator Logwood. "You talk like a man who had been reared in a dugout."

"Well, you aint missed it so far at that," said Mack Mason with another hearty laugh.

"Tut, tut, tut, tut!" sputtered Senator

Logwood. "People are asleep in this hotel. After all her talk about the details of her wedding, what makes you think she isn't interested in getting married?"

"Well, there aint no brick church here, Senator," Mason innocently explained, "and there aint no cut flowers growing around here; never is none in June, anyway. That's too late in the summer. And there aint hardly any kids. And Senator, she wants a lot of bridesmaids, and there aint but about five or six girls in town, and some of them wont do because she don't speak to them."

"Doesn't she speak to the yellow-headed cashier and Gussie?" asked Senator Logwood with one of those sudden intuitive flashes which had made him a terror on cross-examinations.

"No, none of them speaks to each other," Mason replied.

"What seems to be the trouble?" Senator Logwood asked with well-pretended ignorance.

"THEY fight about me," Mack Mason replied. "I'm having the time of my sweet young life. Here I am a grown-up man and never so much as had a notice from a woman except when one of them said, 'There goes that clumsy clown,' and now I got three of them fighting about me and me a-kissing all three of them and buying them rings. And Senator, they started all this. I just sit back and give 'em their turns. If I was in a bigger town, Senator, I'd have to hire me a policeman to keep 'em in line."

"And you call yourself a grown man," muttered Senator Logwood with disgust.

"Senator, what's a few diamond rings to me?" Mason demanded. "And a few kisses aint going to hurt none of these girls. We're all having a good time. The girls aint getting on well among themselves, but, Senator, women never does. Minute you get a gang of them together, they start a fight. I don't see why you want to take on so about this here little play-party."

"All right," agreed Senator Logwood. "On the whole I guess that in your ignorance you are handling the matter fairly well. Give all of them rings. Pick out one that you don't want to kiss and give her a ring, too. She might make a valuable witness."

"Senator, the minute I give 'em a ring they up and kiss me," Mack Mason ex-

plained. "I sure am a terror among the ladies all of a sudden. Mamma always said I was good-looking, but it took a long time for anyone else to find it out."

"Your case is pathetic," mumbled Senator Logwood. "Good night. You have kept me up, now, half the night. Go to bed."

Mack Mason started to protest this accusation but thought better of it. As he reached for the door to close it behind him, he noted its condition.

"Sheriff bust up the game?" he asked.

"Yes," admitted Senator Logwood, "but found no evidence."

"You needn't have said that last," Mason remarked with a chuckle. "They never do find no evidence when you're in the room. Put you all sour, though, and you had to take it out on me. Good night." Mack Mason tramped heavily down the hall. He would tiptoe for two steps and then come down on his heel harder than if he had not tried to walk quietly.

EARLY the following morning Senator Logwood locked himself in a telephone booth and fought a wordy battle with long distance for an hour and a half. He emerged with a very wet collar but a happy smile and went to the telegraph office, where he sent one hundred dollars to an orphan asylum, by telegraph. That night Mack Mason and Gussie occupied the little side-porch. Senator Logwood stumbled upon them half a dozen times and made himself very unpopular with Gussie. The following night Mack Mason and Maybelle occupied the side-porch; but Senator Logwood discovered that the draft from the lobby of the hotel would carry the smoke of some twelve cigars and pipes directly across the little porch, and he opened the door. Also he sat down and talked, which meant that the group of men in the lobby would never go to bed. Another party was ruined.

The following morning, as Senator Logwood and Mack Mason sat down to breakfast, Senator Logwood announced: "We move today into the little white cottage across from the lumber yard. I have rented it, furniture and all, and had a telephone put in. See that our baggage is carried over. I shall go down to meet the morning train to the oil fields. The train will probably be late as usual, and I may spend the entire morning there. On my return I shall go to the cottage. We

will have lunch there and there will be a guest." Mack Mason's eyes opened wider and wider as this recital continued, but at its conclusion he merely gulped half a cup of coffee and said: "Suits me."

Within half an hour after the belated train had come in the village of Zephyr was buzzing with news. A woman in a uniform of some kind had met Senator Logwood and given him a smiling little baby about two years of age. He had taken it in an automobile and driven to the white cottage. Senator Logwood and Mack Mason would make their home at the white cottage. The village wondered when the mother of the baby would appear, and whether she would turn out to be Mack Mason's wife or Senator Logwood's daughter. Both of them were supposed to be bachelors.

A cedar chest came with the baby. Mack Mason rubbed his eyes and blinked, as first the baby and then the chest were carried in by Senator Logwood and deposited on the dining-room table. Senator Logwood summoned the middle-aged woman housekeeper, who fished out the necessary implements and then began setting a place for the baby at the table. To Mack Mason's astonishment a high-chair appeared.

When the innocent cause of all this excitement began to eat, a broad smile settled over Mack Mason's fat moon-face.

"Looky, Senator," he said. "The little rascal can't tell his mouth from his ear. I'm going to feed him."

"I wish you would," said Senator Logwood. "It's a her, not a him."

"Where did you get it?" Mack Mason asked timidly.

"For the present that must remain a profound secret," said Senator Logwood. "I would like to ask a great favor of you, Mack Mason, but I hesitate on account of your numerous entanglements here. This child has come into my possession in an embarrassing manner that I do not wish to explain to anyone at present—" Senator Logwood ceased speaking and stared out the open window at the lumber-yard.

"Senator, you know I like kids," said Mack Mason. "Is this here embarrassment so bad that I couldn't adopt this here kid?"

"We will attend to that later," said Senator Logwood with a worried expression. "For the present, if you will claim the child, I shall consider it—"

"You mean tell folks I'm its—its—its—" Mason stumbled.

"No, you need not say you are its father," Senator Logwood interrupted, "but just let it be known that the child is in your care or something of the sort. We will arrange other matters later."

"I GOT to send some telegrams," Mack Mason suddenly stated, and rushed to the front door, dropping his napkin on the front steps. He returned half an hour later to see the baby fighting a losing battle against sleep. The baby had eaten heartily. Her eyelids were drooping, and finally her little head went down in her little plate.

"Damn, but you're careless with that kid," declared Mack Mason as he picked up the baby's head and took Senator Logwood's napkin with a jerk. Senator Logwood smiled an owlish lingering smile and then wiped a tear from his eye.

"Why all the telegrams?" he asked. "Has anything gone wrong?"

"It's a good thing I'm here," declared Mack Mason as he wiped the baby's cheek, trying to prevent the wobbly head from falling back into the plate. It was quite a difficult operation as Mack Mason managed it. The housekeeper stood in the kitchen doorway with a wet towel in her hand, but Senator Logwood motioned for her to remain where she was. It was a difficult order to obey in the face of the way the baby was being handled.

"I feel like a widow woman," Mack Mason declared. "I'll bet this whole oil field goes to wreck while I mind this baby, and all I'll get out of it will be some cross-eyed, freckle-faced, bow-legged, galoot of a female hen will come romping in here with a writ of come-and-take-'em and bust me all up in business. Senator, do you reckon we can hold this here kid?"

"I'm sure of it," said Senator Logwood. "What were the telegrams about?"

"Well, I sent off for some women's magazines so I can tell something about this business," said Mack Mason, "and I ordered a toy store. This kid has got to have a tricycle and a rocking-horse and a rag doll. And I sent for that nigger woman in San Antonio and told her to bring her oil stove along. That's the one I told you about that can make the best Hamburger steak in the world with onions in it. It aint respectable where I come from to raise a baby without a nigger mammy. She knows

all that stuff about Br'er Fox and the rabbit and them things that kids have got to have if they aint going to get the colic and die. Don't let me forget; there's some books about what a young wife has got to learn. I got to write some letters and get them. And, Senator, I met Christine just as she was coming out of that place where she works on the way to lunch, and I told her to come on up tonight and we'd spend the evening playing with the baby. She nearly dropped dead, Senator. I told her sure it was my baby and she told me where me and my baby could go. Senator, that girl aint no lady."

"Did she offer to give your ring back?" asked Senator Logwood, choking a laugh with difficulty.

"Senator, she threw it at me," replied Mack Mason. "I told her not to get all mad up, that I had the kisses and it sure was her ring. And then she picked it up and paddled on off with it. She said she was going to see a lawyer."

"Yes, that's what she'll do," said Senator Logwood. "And they'll try to prove that you are married and have misled the lady. But if you will just stay single, I think we can handle the matter."

"Well, they don't get this kid away from me," declared Mack Mason, who was now holding the sleeping infant in his lap. Senator Logwood walked out on the front porch to laugh unobserved.

"That sends one of them on a long wild-goose chase," he muttered.

AFTER having been assured some ten or twelve times that the baby would take an afternoon nap without being rocked, Mack Mason reluctantly left the house and journeyed through the dust of Main Street to attend to the details of his business. He returned for the evening meal and sat as though hypnotized, watching the infant toddle around the floor chasing a large red rubber ball.

"Well, it's healthy, and we got to keep it that way," he stated resolutely.

"She is healthy," corrected Senator Logwood, with heavy emphasis on the first word. "A baby is not an 'it.'"

"Aint she got a name?" Mack Mason asked. Before Senator Logwood could answer, Mason said: "Let's name her Gussie."

There was a knock at the door. The housekeeper opened it, and Senator Logwood quietly left the room. Mack Mason

sat down on the floor to participate in the game with the red ball. The caller proved to be Gussie, and she was in a bad humor, so Senator Logwood hastily indicated to the housekeeper that the doors to the dining-room should be closed.

"I know what is on your mind," said Senator Logwood in a gentle voice. "This is a difficult and complicated matter. It has all sorts of possibilities. If I were you, I would keep very carefully out of it. Mack Mason is a sort of gay deceiver. There is no telling how things might be made to appear for you if you were dragged into this." Gussie had not thought of it in that light. She sat uneasily in the large rocking-chair and looked longingly at the diamond ring on her finger. "Mack Mason is not as wealthy as he pretends," said Senator Logwood. "But you have the diamond ring, and if I were you, I would keep it."

"He'd raise a fuss?" asked Gussie.

"He don't dare to," said Senator Logwood with a knowing smile.

"When he comes, don't tell him I was here," said Gussie. She rose.

"I will not say a word to him," Senator Logwood assured her.

She smiled her thanks and departed. Senator Logwood bowed low and closed the door.

The following morning he sought out Christine and presented the matter in the same light in which he had outlined it to Gussie. He observed that Christine was wearing the diamond ring. Christine listened attentively, thought the matter over, thanked Senator Logwood and hastened to the office of the attorney she had consulted the afternoon before. When she arrived at the attorney's office, the ring was in her purse.

AT lunch that day Mack Mason was unwilling to trust his baby to the high-chair. He preferred to hold her in his lap. He was feeding the baby with one spoon while the baby was feeding herself with another, Mason being powerless to prevent it because both his hands were busy. The harassed housekeeper hovered near, ready to rush to the rescue in the event of threatened casualties, but Mason was unmindful of the uneasiness he was giving those around him. He was entertaining the child with a series of noises which puzzled Senator Logwood, who could not imagine how they were made.

As the child was being put to bed for the afternoon nap, there was a knock at the door. The housekeeper opened the door. Samantha Pearlina Johnson had arrived, all three hundred pounds of her, black and smiling.

"Wha' is dat fool white man?" she asked with a broad grin.

"Come on in," yelled Mack Mason. "Be quiet because the baby's asleep."

"That is what I was about to tell you," said Senator Logwood. "You and Samantha Pearlina have excellent voices for calling animals, but not very good voices for a nursery."

"Senator, you sure are hard to get on with," remarked Mason. "Did you bring that oil stove?" he asked Samantha.

"It's a-comin'," replied Samantha. "'Spressman said he got a carload o' foolishness for you-all. It's a-comin' too."

"Good," Mack Mason commented. Samantha Pearlina waddled into the room where the baby was sleeping and fondled the tiny curls around her ears.

"Bless you' little baby heart," she whispered. "You sure is out o' luck fallin' in wid Mistah Mason, but I gwine take good care o' you, bless you' little baby heart."

"That's the way you got to talk to them," Mack Mason whispered to Senator Logwood. "Aint nobody knows how to do it but a three-hundred-pound snowball."

"What's her name?" asked Samantha Pearlina.

"How do you know it's a her?" demanded Mack Mason.

"Huh, can't fool me," grunted Samantha.

"Aint she a wonder?" Mack Mason asked Senator Logwood, who agreed but did not admit it.

"Her name is Mary," asserted Senator Logwood.

"That's a fine name," exclaimed Mack Mason. "I been puzzling about it. You can't name her Mack or Robert or Culpepper or Logwood."

"All girls should be named Mary," asserted Senator Logwood. "Come on out of here now, all of you, and let her have some sleep."

"You go on downtown, Senator," said Mack Mason, "and see how the county is getting on with the roads. I'm going to stay here and wait for the toys. Some of those magazines ought to be here by now, too. We got to get this business organized and in running order."

SENATOR LOGWOOD strolled along Main Street, well pleased with the success of his experiment. The business of the roads called for a trip to the scene of operations, and he was late for the evening meal. He ate alone. Usually under such circumstances Mack Mason would have taken a seat at the table anyway, but this evening he was not present.

"Where is Mr. Mason?" Senator Logwood finally asked the housekeeper. The housekeeper's naturally sour face was even more so as she replied: "In there on the floor playing with the baby's toys. The child hasn't noticed them. She has a tin can with a marble in it that she likes, and Mason has been playing on the floor all afternoon. The house is a sight."

A moment later Mack Mason entered the room. There was a small bandage on his left hand.

"What's the trouble?" Senator Logwood asked, his eyes indicating the bandage.

"There's a piece in one of those magazines about how to make a baby's swing out of a barrel," he explained, "and me, like a rubber-headed idiot, I had to take a hack at it."

"I see," said Senator Logwood. "Wont you sit down and be sociable?"

Mack Mason took a seat. A few seconds later the housekeeper summoned him. When he returned ten minutes later, Senator Logwood raised his eyebrows questioningly.

"It was Maybelle," he explained. "Senator, Maybelle is all right. She come to tell me that she heard I murdered my wife and ran off with the baby and a lot of other things, but she said she didn't believe a word of it, and she come to tell me that me and her is still friends. She said she didn't care to mess around in my private business, but that she just wanted me to know that she's still for me strong. Senator, I'm going to marry that girl."

"Did you tell her so?" asked Senator Logwood.

"No," Mack Mason replied, "but I am. That's the right kind of a girl. Senator, why didn't you ever get married? Every time I ask you, you duck. What kind of a dark secret are you hiding from me?"

"I have never hidden anything from you except that which is sacred to me," said Senator Logwood in a low tone. "My boy, —I almost said, 'My son,'—I have never told you before because you were never in the mood to hear."

Senator Logwood pushed back his chair, looked at the reflection of his neat silver locks in the mirror on the wall and then lighted a cigarette. Mason waited for the story.

"When I was a very young man," Senator Logwood resumed, "I had the good fortune to fall under the influence of a girl who held within her slender form all that is perfect and wonderful and pure and beautiful in womanhood. She unconsciously guided my young manhood in the right paths because she had filled me with the desire to be worthy of her companionship. In her smiles and faith I found the reward for all that men are proud to accomplish. In the fear of her disfavor I could contemplate enough of hell to dismay any human. We were very young but in no hurry to bring to a close the beautiful companionship which marked our engagement. I had asked her parents for her hand and they had solemnly assented. She gave me her heart, and I held it as a priceless treasure. We were one in spirit, so we knew no separations. Elaborate arrangements had been made for the wedding after the fashion of those days. Not long before the appointed day which had been arranged by my mother and hers, she fell ill of a fever." Senator Logwood stopped to light his cigarette and to prevent his voice from breaking. "She died," he resumed. "Somewhere beyond the stars she is waiting for me and we will have our wedding and she will wear her pretty dress and our mothers will be there." Senator Logwood's voice had finally failed him.

"Senator, I couldn't never love no woman that way," declared Mack Mason.

"Of course you couldn't," Senator Logwood agreed. "And I can't stand it to think of you picking up with some one you hardly know out here in this—this. Mack Mason, you are a clownish lump of clay; what right have you to wish your bad English and your infernal chewing-tobacco off on some sweet young woman? And, anyway, you started out a bachelor, and you ought to remain one. I can't live out the lonely years without you. And we've got a political campaign coming on. How can I handle a political campaign this summer with you away honeymooning?"

Senator Logwood wiped the tears from his eyes and laughed. Mason rose and walked out of the room. He was thinking seriously about the situation for the first time. In a few minutes he returned.

"Senator, I'm going down to see Maybelle," he announced, "and walk home with her when that feed-trough closes up and tell her about how things look and pay the damages. Hell, I aint in love and never was and never will be." There was a knock at the door. Mack Mason opened it and greeted one of the truck-drivers in his employ.

"Mr. Mason," said the young man, "I want to draw a hundred and fifty dollars. I need it bad."

"I told you that crap game was going to be pulled," said Mason as he reached into his hip pocket.

"No, it aint a crap game," explained the young man. "Tell you the truth, Mr. Mason, I found the girl I was engaged to in Kansas City, and we want to get married right away."

"Hell's fire!" roared Mack Mason. "Sure thing. Take it for a present. Have you got a ring?"

"No, not yet," the young man admitted.

"WELL, here's a ring, too," said Mason, bringing it out of his vest pocket. "I don't know whether it will fit or not, but I reckon you can get it fixed. Is she a big girl? This is a big ring."

"She's fairly big," replied the truck-driver, not wishing to take any chances on the size of the ring resulting in its loss.

"What's her name?" asked Mason.

"Maybelle," replied the driver.

"Maybelle what?" gasped Mack Mason.

"Maybelle Smythe," the driver replied.

"Are you sure? Spell it," Mason demanded.

The young man spelled it.

"Yes, that's her all right," Mason said. "Why, that girl has been taking my dinner check and making change for me for weeks. Here's another hundred. Boy, you are

sure getting a fine girl. Good night and good luck." Mason slammed the door and returned to the dining-room.

"Are you going to see that girl tonight?" asked Senator Logwood.

"No, not going to see her at all. Don't have to," Mason declared with a grin.

"I could tell you why but I sure wont. You can hear it yourself in the morning. That'll be time enough for you to come around here while I'm tending my baby and laugh at me."

"Well, she's a fine girl and I'm glad she's married or going to be married or whatever it is," said Senator Logwood.

"Dad burn you, anyway!" exclaimed Mack Mason.

"Now about that baby," said Senator Logwood, "we will—"

"That's my baby," Mack Mason asserted.

"All I was going to suggest," said Senator Logwood, "is that you can adopt the child whenever you wish, provided you obtain a competent trained, educated specialist to supervise the care of her."

"But I can keep Samantha Pearlina Johnson, can't I?" asked Mason.

"Yes," agreed Senator Logwood.

"All right then. You fix the papers some day soon," said Mack Mason, "but I sure want Pearlina around to keep that specialist from killing the kid. I reckon the papers will rescue my good name around this highly moral metropolis."

"We will have to go slowly, of course," said Senator Logwood. "There are still two of your darlings running at large."

"Yes, that's right," agreed Mason, "but I got rid of my last diamond ring to-night."

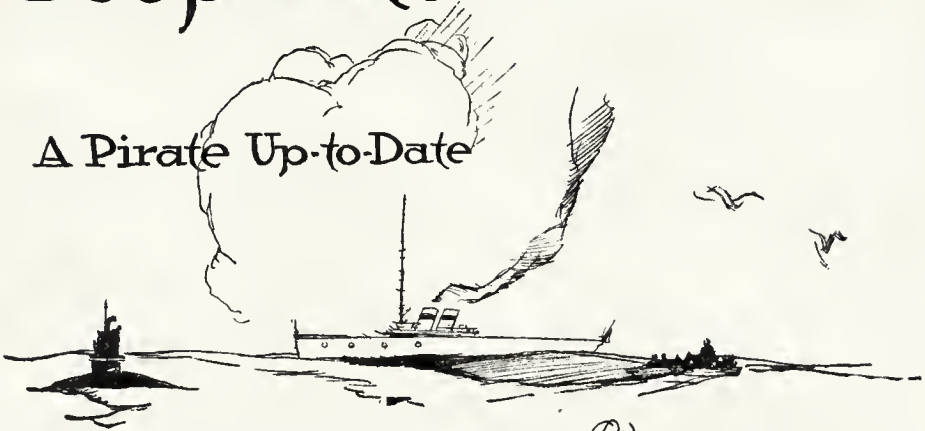
"And to whom did you present it?" Senator Logwood asked.

"A man," said Mason.

"THE BARNETT MYSTERY," another joyous exploit of the inimitable Mack Mason and that silver-haired old darling Senator Logwood, will appear in the next, the May, issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

Deep Water Men

A Pirate Up-to-Date



AN exciting adventure in Pacific seas, described in that spirited style so characteristic of Mr. Zandtt's works.

Cy
**Culpeper
Zandtt**

ON the morning of Friday, August fifteenth, Captain Whalen reached Thursday Island with the officers and crew of the *Neathshire*, in open boats. Inside of three hours, the Cable Company had practically all the details. In Manila, Shanghai, Hongkong and Singapore, the evening papers carried a column or more of the story on the front page—the French, Japanese and Dutch papers getting it cabled from the early editions. By evening, the whole Archipelago was ringing with it—they were posting bulletins as far as Bombay and Aden. In spite of the fact that the war was over and the world already busy with the gigantic task of reconstruction, the *Neathshire* had been stopped by a very businesslike submarine of unmistakable German build, in the Arafura Sea, while on her way from Iloilo to Sydney with hemp and cabinet lumber. Captain Whalen was given half an hour to get his crew and their personal belongings into the boats. During this time, men from the U-boat were placing bombs in her engine-room and stokehold to blow the bottom out, amidships, and removing various stores of which they were in need. Whalen was ordered to proceed with his boats in whatever direction he decided upon, being warned that if they were in sight when the steamer was sunk, the U-boat would follow and shell them.

As the sub had appeared during the first

dog-watch, it was dark before they had rowed far enough to be out of sight from the *Neathshire's* masthead; but they were quite evidently obeying orders when last observed, so were not further molested. A little later, they distinctly caught the sound of two explosions—muffled by distance—so that they fixed the time of her sinking at a little after eight bells in the evening watch, August eighth. A week later, they reached Thursday Island and gave to an astounded world the most uncomfortable jolt it received during 1919. In maritime circles, orders were being placed for shipbuilding to an extent never seen before. Freight and passenger lines were reorganizing for international trade with the feeling that the submarine horror was a thing of the past, a nightmare best forgotten. And now—the thing was again a deadly menace to every ship that sailed the seas—to every man, woman and child who ventured to travel on deep water. Men talked of little else that evening over their coffee, in the clubs and hotels. Women shuddered over the story on bungalow verandas and in their rickshaws, as they went on from dinner to dance and home again.

To be sure, no lives had been lost. It was reported that Whalen and his crew had been treated with a fair amount of civility—had been permitted to take their personal belongings and plenty of provisions for a week or ten days in the boats.

But if submarines were again at work, sinking ships on the high seas without even the excuse of war, there was no reason to suppose that the next U-boat commander would be as decent in his treatment of individuals. Piracy is never a gentleman's game—except in lurid fiction.

THE most puzzling feature of the affair was the apparent lack of motive. According to the consular reports, Whalen's manifest showed—aside from the hemp and high-grade lumber—less than ten thousand dollars' worth of stuff aboard which would seem to have been worth looting or which could have been stowed on the U-boat. A few sealed packages in the Captain's safe had been intrusted to him by a couple of clerks in the employ of a Philippine branch-bank, for delivery to people in Sydney; but it seemed unlikely that jewels or anything of great value would have been sent by a thirteen-knot tramp-steamer instead of in the strong-room of a liner.

There were, it is true, several barrels of petrol—which the U-boat might have needed to replenish her tanks—and a quantity of canned provisions, also a possible necessity. But none of these seemed weighty enough to account for the attacking and sinking of a six-thousand-ton cargo-boat. It was assumed without much thought or discussion that she would be a white elephant on the hands of the U-boat commander if he attempted to keep her, as he had neither sufficient crew to handle such a boat nor any port into which she might be taken without discovery inside of a few weeks. And the story of Whalen and his crew was conclusive on this plan, anyway. They had seen the attacking crew fixing bombs below, and had distinctly heard the two explosions when her bottom was blown out. She had but six bulkheads—the tunnel into the stokehold cut this down to four, when it came to keeping the water out; and this was not half enough.

Before morning, instructions had gone out from the Admiralty, in London, to every commander in the Pacific and Asiatic squadrons. Emergency meetings had been called by shipowners and port-authorities to organize a campaign for the extermination of submarines. Reports cabled from Berlin disavowed any responsibility whatsoever upon the part of the new German government, which stated positively that its navy department hadn't a single U-boat left in its possession.

DURING the cooler morning hours Singapore, Connaught Drive, Cavenagh Bridge and Collyer Quay are riotous in color and seething Oriental life: Europeans in white coming down in rickshaws to their business offices or on shopping trips; coolies trudging along under burdens that would break a white man's back; Javanese clerks and *gharry* drivers; Tamil laborers; Hindu and Malay rajahs in gorgeous costumes; white turbans—red, orange and green turbans, conical straw hats—white pith helmets; all milling and interweaving in the stream which pours across the bridge and through the sidewalk arcades of the business quarter south of the river. To stand at one side and pick out this or that individual from the mass, or to keep track of him as he moves through it; to note with whom he speaks during brief pauses, and fix their faces in one's mind—is a task practically impossible for any but the trained observer.

At nine o'clock, for example, a woman in white, wearing a very wide-brimmed straw hat with a *crêpe-de-Chine puggaree* which left her face so much in shadow as to be unrecognizable at a short distance, stopped her rickshaw-wallah on Connaught Drive just north of the bridge to chat with a man who might have been English or American from his appearance, but who was neither. Seemingly, he was sauntering comfortably down to his counting-room in Raffles Place or one of the other commercial streets; but as they began chatting, presumably upon the lightest of social affairs, it occurred to the wallah that he couldn't understand a word. This was a matter of no consequence to *him*; but a good many people in the Eastern Archipelago would have found it of absorbing interest, so it is translated from the Russian for the reader's benefit.

“YOU seem pleased about something this morning, Gregor! Have you just secured a charter at double the prevailing ocean freights? Or is it something in the cable-news that's unusually welcome?”

“Am I supposed to answer that definitely, 'Stasia, or are you just expressing mutual congratulations—eh?” (A meaning look passed between them.)

“H-m-m—I don't understand, yet, how it happens that we seem to be going ahead with the original plan! Who's in command? Where did he get that craft? Has he more than one to work with?”

"On that point, I'm as ignorant as you are. But the man in command is Lieutenant Heinrich Brommer, formerly of the Imperial Navy. Of that, I'm quite sure! I talked with him in Manila a few weeks ago—and, while he would not explain where he proposed to obtain a late type of U-boat, he told me that he expected to be cruising in one not later than the first of the month. He was on the *U-119* with von Sommerlich before she was stolen from us and sunk—knows how to handle a 'sub' under any possible conditions. If he keeps going the way he's started in, we'll have ocean transportation paralyzed in three months—"

The keen dark eyes in the shadow under the big hat had been glancing subconsciously over the moving throng while he was speaking—and suddenly focused upon two men who were chatting from one rickshaw to another just abreast of them.

"Just a second, Gregor! Don't let them catch you looking—but glance at those two men in the brown rickshaws! I'm pointing at them—look at the hand in my lap. See? Can you get their faces distinctly? Yes? Fix them clearly in your mind! Ever see either of them before?"

THE rickshaws moved on, and their occupants disappeared in the crowd.

"Why—yes. In the clubs or hotels, I suppose. Aren't they some of that lot in the scientific expedition? Chaps who are doing hydrographic work in that little motor-ship that lies over in the Keppel Harbor, near the Reef?"

"Exactly that! The one nearest us was Jim Medford, who commands the expedition, and the man in the other rickshaw was his mate, Sam Torrey, though I fancy they're all pretty chummy and pay little attention to their relative rank aboard ship. What is of particular interest to *us*, however, is the fact that they've been Nemesis on our trail for several months. It was Medford who dug up the information about that Swede syndicate of von Sommerlich's which obtained the two submarines which were not surrendered. He got together an expedition, located the places where the Graf was hiding them, sunk one, and captured the other. She went to the bottom in Port Darwin harbor, as you may remember. That didn't seem to satisfy them, either. They managed to discover the ships we had hidden up the *Sesajap* in Borneo—made a government affair of it and collected the salvage. And they've just

bilked Paul Kragorovitch out of his scheme to get the *Wylanda* away from Captain Murray's daughter. Some of our lot tried to kill Medford, twice, but I think he must have fool's luck! Anyhow, those two men and Stevens, their engineer, have done more to balk our plans than anyone else, not even excepting the British and French governments. If ever you can manage it without too much risk, kill them! Don't let any mawkish sentiment influence you for a moment!"

Gregor laughed.

"Hmph! Your advice is excellent, 'Stasia. No question as to our plans being safer with such meddling fools out of the way! But you overlook one fact which applies to yourself as well as the rest of us. In order to make our organization in Asia what it is, we have worked for years to establish ourselves in positions of respectability and commercial influence. I, for example,—born Gregor Demitrov, in Kiev,—am Mr. Gregory Dennison, of Hanfield, Whitby Co., in Singapore, an Englishman whom nobody suspects of alien birth. You are Miss Anastasia O'Meara, sent out to the Orient by a well-known social-welfare society of London to study race-problems and make exhaustive reports on them. Under the rose, you fight for England's ruin with whatever weapons come to your hand, even our secret *Gesellschaft* to make Germany's merchant-marine dominate world-trade. Were either of us implicated in assassination, it would not only make us useless to the organization forever after, but would lead to casting suspicion upon everyone with whom we associate. Let us have those men killed if it can be done by some one who has obvious cause for hating them—or frame something to get the Government after them. But there must be no possible way of implicating *us*, with the positions of trust and influence we now hold. I can't see much serious interference with our plans in the long run—we're too strong and work through too many unsuspected channels!"

THE foregoing scrap of talk cropped out from the general babel that morning like a loose end of string from a tangled skein. There were others, here and there—undercurrents, crossing and intermingling in that age-old web of intrigue which is the life of Asia. A tall, thin Englishman of soldierly bearing was striding aimlessly along on his morning constitutional.

He was Major Claude Worthington, R. A. C., Retired, living on money inherited some ten years before, and known generally among British residents in most parts of the China Sea for his really excellent bridge and his reminiscences of India. In a rickshaw, passing him, there sat a well-built though languid figure in spotless white linen, wearing a "Monte Christo" Panama which any knowing observer would have priced at a hundred dollars, gold. He wore, also, glasses thick enough to dispense with rims—which, curiously, had no magnifying power in the focal plane. The eyes of Lee Fong Yan, millionaire merchant of Telok Ayer Street and graduate of Cornell University, were of that bottomless brown which shades to black, and concealed in their depths whatever oblique thoughts their owner might be considering at the moment. But the glasses added an appearance of guilelessness really unnecessary; for Lee is, as far as anyone in the Archipelago knows, one of the most worthy and substantial citizens in Singapore. No one mistakes for a moment his high-caste birth or breeding. Those whose race-prejudice betrays itself in barely repressed insolence seldom repeat the offense. As he passed Major Worthington on the Bridge, he asked his wallah to slow up.

"Good morning, Major! I have something at my godown which may interest you. Fresh boxes of Wu Chang Lun's special cheroots—came up on the *Rumphius* yesterday, from Batavia. There's an empty rickshaw in front of the Club. Hadn't you better come down with me for a hundred or so of them?"

"Why—er—bless my soul, Lee! Rather startled me a bit, don't you know! What? Thinkin' of somethin' else! Er—quite so! Very decent of you, I'm sure! Mustn't ride, y'know! Get rheumatism in the joints if I don't exercise. What? But I'll jolly soon be along, never fear! Before you've opened your post, I fancy."

NOW this was all casual enough, was it not? So perfectly obvious that the dozen or more in the crowd who overheard it never gave the brief exchange of civilities a second thought. Yet Lee Fong Yan, influential director on the Chinese Board of Trade, had asked and made an appointment for a confidential interview with the supposed retired army officer upon some matter of the utmost moment, having his own firm conviction that the genial, eccen-

tric Briton was actually one of the keenest secret agents of the Government Intelligence Department in the Straits Settlements. And that supposed man of leisure welcomed the suggestion with a belief that he was likely to hear something of the gravest importance to His Majesty's Government. The Chinese have their own mysterious but invariably accurate sources of information concerning pretty nearly everything which happens between Nagasaki and Aden. Fifteen minutes later, he walked into the private office of the Celestial millionaire at the rear of the Telok Ayer Street godown. After brandy-peg, cakes and the heavenly cheroots had been placed upon tabourets of gold-lacquer by their chairs, Lee very deliberately got down to business.

"Of course you perfectly understand, Major, what I have in mind just now? We merchants can no more afford to permit that sort of thing on the high seas than the British and French governments. Off-hand, I had hoped that our organization would know, this morning, the approximate base from which that sub must be operating, because there isn't an island or a district in the Eastern Archipelago where there are not Chinese from one province or another, and we have our own means of communication to supplement the cables. But from the Solomon Islands clear across to the African coast, we've had nothing more definite than suggestions of at least a dozen places where a submarine base might exist for months without discovery. Frankly, I was amazed to learn that there were even that many!"

"Yes,—I've friends in the Service who've admitted as much to me. But I fancy you have somethin' a bit more definite—what?"

"I had the impression that the men who smoked out those other two U-boats and sent them to the bottom might offer a few suggestions worth considering."

"Medford and his scientific pals, you'll be referrin' to? Eh?"

"Those are the men. I ran out to their ship at six this morning, and breakfasted with them. Just a friendly call—with an entirely different excuse. But we drifted into the discussion quite naturally, as everyone in the East is doing. They were as much in the dark as everyone else, until we began to thresh it out a little. Then it got down to cross-questioning and theory between Medford and me—"

"An' ye succeeded in workin' out some reasonable hypothesis? Aye?"

"Well, we did and we didn't. I'm permitted to give you one inference in confidence—because I put it up to them, and they said they trusted your discretion—"

"Eh? 'Pon honor! Jolly decent of 'em, what? You may be quite sure I'll not abuse it! Go on!"

"WELL—I've a pretty strong impression that sub they captured did not sink in Port Darwin harbor as reported, and that they actually got away with her, finally dismantling the craft and hiding it in what they considered a safe place, thinking they might possibly have some future use for her in salvage work. When I came ashore, an hour ago, I'd formed an impression either that the mysterious German outfit which we know exists has managed to discover and refit that *U-119* of theirs, or else that the other one which they sunk in that uninhabited harbor on the south side of Lombok didn't stay sunk. We didn't get it quite down to that, but the general line of reasoning which I could follow in their minds appeared to be one of elimination. Since the armistice, officers of the Allied armies and navies have closely inspected every port and shipyard in Germany, Austria and the Balkans. There were no submarines left in any of them, and there has been no chance to build one, since, unobserved. In the Scandinavian countries and Spain, our watch has been very nearly as close. Foch made a point of having it close. An unknown naval base here in the East Indies or among some of the Pacific atolls is possible enough; but it's highly improbable, because our naval blockade was so close that every steamer afloat has been accounted for, and it would seem almost impossible for several of them to reach such a base with the necessary outfit and equipment."

"Fact remains, however, that at least one U-boat—in quite efficient condition—is actually operatin' at this moment! An' that others are likely to appear any day!"

"If Medford's theory of elimination is right—they're not! It's a case of this one lone pirate, whom we're bound to get, sooner or later—"

"Aye, but if we don't get him at once? Eh? If we don't manage to stop him an' he gets a dozen or more good-sized boats, he'll have plenty of equipment for a ship-buildin' plant in some unknown bay or

inlet out here! Then he'll be turnin' out more U-boats before you can say 'Bingo!' An' there you are! What?"

"That's about what Medford seemed to have in mind. You evidently doubt that the *Neathshire* was really sunk? I've had a similar conviction ever since the story came over the cable, yesterday. Medford and Torrey laugh at the sinking theory—and point out their inferential proof that a secret German organization, more widespread and powerful than the Government would even admit, is systematically accumulating steamer after steamer in the upbuilding of a great fleet which is going to compete murderously for the world's maritime trade. No getting around that, you know! They've as good as proved that by salvaging a lot of boats supposed to have been sunk. When you consider it from that angle, the motive for this new form of piracy is supplied—nothing incomprehensible at all! They'll lay-up their captured prizes at this secret base, rip the builders' plates off the engine-room bulkheads and change their rig and paint until it would puzzle even a navy quartermaster to swear positively as to their previous names and ownership. Then, when final treaties permit them to start open shipbuilding again, every one of those 'lost ships' will appear under German names and colors."

THE Englishman and his influential Chinese friend discussed the proposition for some time longer. While they were planning a naval search, based upon the theory worked out with the Americans, other loose threads in the tangled skein were being drawn imperceptibly to the interweaving. The Fates decreed, for example, that a Chinese coolie from Hanoi should step out of the moving throng just north of Cavenagh Bridge and set down by the curb the heavy case he was carrying on his shoulders, while he readjusted the sling of cotton cloth which held it in place. Coming from the Tongking, he of course understood French as it is spoken in Asia. Hearing snatches of talk all around him in which 'Pidgin' or English predominated, he was naturally alert to the commercial tongue of his own country when he heard it spoken between a European at the side of the road and a handsome woman who had stopped her rickshaw-wallah for a few minutes.

At first, the talk was on casual topics.

Then the woman happened to mention that she was leaving for Hongkong four days later by way of Saigon, on one of the newer Messageries boats. The man appeared concerned at this. After a short pause, he urged her very strongly to cancel her passage by that line and wait for a P. & O. boat, the following week. In quite-evident surprise, she questioned him closely as to the reason for such a suggestion. But he would say nothing more definite than that the *Huamuong* was a frightfully unlucky boat—that many passengers had died aboard of her and been buried at sea. He was so evidently in earnest, however, that she began to feel increasing distaste for the steamer she had chosen, and presently agreed to cancel her reservation, though it meant changing her plans in many particulars and remaining in Singapore longer than she had intended. When the wallah presently trotted off with her and the coolie again lifted the load to his shoulders, he was doing more thinking than is generally supposed possible in men of his class.

Coming from the town of Quang Yen, he usually answered to an abbreviation of it by way of a name. And he had traveled three times on that same Messageries liner, *Huamuong*, since she came out new from the yards at Toulon. Had chosen her deliberately because others of his caste had assured him that she was a most fortunate boat—the prayer-wheel had confirmed this when he traced ideographs on thin rice-paper, chewed it to pulp and threw the spitball in the prescribed manner. It stuck. During his three voyages from Saigon, where the coasting junk left him, there had been no deaths aboard. Two of his townsmen had been stokers on her for nearly a year—waxing fatter each trip, though they frequently worked in temperatures of 50 Réaumur.

IF then, the steamer—seventeen knots, and handsomely fitted up—was really a fortunate boat (as had been proved beyond doubt, according to Wang Yen's belief), the man had deliberately lied to the woman. Nothing out of the way about this—it was frequently necessary that women should not be told the truth, as every Oriental knows. For is there not a saying of Confucius that "potent information in a woman's hands is like an arrow which slips unawares from thumb and finger when the bow be drawn—killing

or wounding another, beyond the tall rice, who does not even know her mother gave birth to a girl-child"? But apparently the lie had been a wasteful lie—not needed, except for the purpose of keeping the woman off that particular boat. If there were danger on her, the lie was a good lie, and had its intended effect. Yet—the boat was not unlucky. On the contrary, she was a fortunate boat. Where, then, could be the danger? Possibly an enemy who meant harm to the woman was sailing on the same craft? In that case, however, the enemy would be watching at the Messageries wharf in Keppel Harbor. If the woman did not sail, he also would stay ashore and wait for her other boat. Suppose the danger was something which might happen en route? Would it not be the same with other steamers going over the same course? And there had been no objection to the woman's proceeding to the same port a few days later, on the P. & O.

When a boy of twelve, Wang had learned from his father that there were advantages to be gained from being a member of this or that Tong. If one died, the Tong saw that one's body was honorably coffined and buried. If one were murdered, the Tong exacted other lives from the assassin's Tong in payment. If one journeyed to a far country, his Tong was there to further his interests. If one required information not obtainable through other channels, the Tong made secret inquiries in many different quarters—or carried the matter up to the Great Tong, which all other Tongs obeyed, no matter what blood-feuds they might have among themselves. Hence, it followed that profit might be had in relating to those concerned with the management of one's Tong any stray bit of information—from matters trivial to matters great. Even if the communication but supplemented what was known before, yet came from a different source, there were usually a few "cash" to be had for the telling; and of really important matters, the reward might go as high as two Mexican or Straits dollars. In exceptional cases, one acquired standing and influence with the Tong which led to many things. All this is learned by every boy in China from the time he is old enough to work in the rice-paddies. As a system, universal training has nothing on it—is really not in the same class. If the raising of Chinese armies for national offense

and defense is ever taken up in a serious way by the Great Tong, the Prussian system will be a withered violet by comparison. China, today, is a nation without cohesion; her people, as a mass, compelled to such all-absorbing work for mere existence that they have no time for intercommunication or the consideration of national teamwork. But if the Tongs ever come to consider national resistance of paramount necessity to their interests and objects, they have a working membership of some four hundred and twenty millions.

THE more Wang thought over what he had heard, the more advisable it seemed to repeat the facts where they might be studied out to advantage. There were, of course, hundreds of his own Tong in Singapore, but Wang was of rather low caste—diffident among his superiors, as becomes one of humble birth and occupation. The man he knew best was a certain Cantonese, Wun Hop, who had been a coolie like himself but a short time before. Wun, however, through study and perseverance had risen in the world. With a born capacity for intrigue, he had managed to ferret out a very important matter for the great Lee Fong Yan of Telok Ayer Street, whose almost incredible learning had been acquired at the University of Princes in the American Province of Cornell. The great man had taken the whim to show favor in Wun Hop's case. He had permitted him to acquire wisdom in a certain night school for wallahs and had intrusted him with important matters as far as Sydney, Bombay and other far places.

At present, Wun Hop was acting as Number One Boy for the great and honest Medford, who had recovered jewels worth a million, gold, from the bottom of the sea and returned them to the noble Rajah of Trelak without asking a penny of reward. Everyone knew the story—knew that Medford and his two honorable companions had been given the secret word of the Great Tong and were in consequence as men who bore charmed lives, inasmuch as Asiatic of any breed would raise a hand against them or fail to interpose his own body in shielding them from harm. For their greater security, they returned each night to their own little motor-ship, the *Bandarwallah*, which lay just off the edge of Pulau Brani Reef, beyond the traffic coming into Keppel

Harbor; and in their absence, Wun Hop was in full charge of her.

To hire passage in a launch from Tanjong Pagar or Jardine's Wharf was an extravagance not warranted by Wang's slender income; but fortunately this was a Tong matter. A brother coolie owned a rowing *sampan* in which he carried people of all castes around Keppel Harbor for a quarter of the launch-rates, and managed to live exceedingly well, at that. He took Wang out to the *Bandarwallah* and fetched him ashore again without charge; but, as Wang had inferred, the information brought him three Straits dollars, so he stood his boatman to a stiff drink of rice-brandy and a small pill of *afyum*. In Wun Hop's case, he would have paid his old friend rather more than the generally accepted price for that kind of service even if the information had seemed more or less trivial. But during the time he had been in the service of Lee Fong Yan and Medford, he had acquired something of the American viewpoint in regard to generous pay for real value and the having standards into which money did not enter at all. The moment the French conversation was repeated to him, he recognized in it something which two powerful governments might consider worth knowing, but which he meant to keep for his patron alone—he being more likely, in Wun's admiring opinion, to make effective use of it.

THE story was told Medford and his two companions when they came off the ship at six bells, that night—told them only when they were below in the after cabin, which they used as their scientific workshop. Wun took no chance of being overheard by some one passing silently in a *sampan*. At first, they were inclined to consider the occurrence merely a matter of superstition upon the part of some man who had more than ordinary interest in a pretty woman. But when Medford questioned Wun as to the general appearance of the couple, which had been photographically described by Wang Yen, his expression grew thoughtful. Presently, his fist came down on the table with a bang:

"By thunder, I believe the man was Kragorovitch! There simply can't be two men in Singapore of his build, with a Van Dyck beard and a mole in just that spot on his Adam's apple! I didn't think he'd have the nerve to come back here from Batavia after being convicted of intended

piracy and only escaping prison on a technicality. But it can't be anyone else from that description. And if he insisted that any friend of his should cancel her passage to Saigon and Hongkong on the *Huamuong*, he knew damned well that something was going to happen aboard that boat and wanted to keep his friend out of it! The question is—what?"

"Hmph! We know what camp Kragorovitch is in and what he's been trying to do!"

"Exactly, Sam! Say! Know what I think? I'll just gamble a thousand dollars with anyone that the cuss in command of that submarine has picked the *Huamuong* as his next victim, and has figured all his arrangements down to the last degree. The sort of craft that Prussian crowd want most of all is just such a boat as this Messageries liner. Latest type—turbines—speed enough to attract the best-paying class of passengers, yet not so much as to knock out all profit with her coal-bills. Accommodation for a couple of hundred in her saloon and as many more, second-cabin. No Asiatic steerage to make her smelly. And enough cargo-space for high-value small-case stuff to make her profitable even with a limited passenger-list."

"Not much question as to their wanting such a boat. But getting possession of her is another matter! What do you suppose the minimum would be in the way of a crew to run her?"

"Probably ten times more than the number they'd need to get her as far as their secret base. That's all they have to do until she comes out with a full crew under Prussian colors. But your point is well taken, just the same. They probably couldn't carry extra men enough in that medium-sized U-boat to handle an eight-thousand-ton liner. Which only means, however, that enough of their men will take passage on her from here to put up a nasty fight on her own decks if the captain attempts to resist or bluff, as he easily may, considering his gold-shipments and mails. Gad! I don't wonder at Kragorovitch not wanting any woman he knows in that mess! Hmph! Say, boys—the more I chew this over, the more it looks to me as if the merest incredible chance had dealt the cards right into our hands!"

"Why? What d'ye think we can do? Of course, if we recaptured that boat after the sub got her, there'd be a devilish good slice of salvage in it for us. But it wont

be altogether any easy job! Besides, we'd about decided to run down to Lombok on the *Bandarwallah* and find out, first of all, if they really did get the *U-119*, or if they managed to raise and repair the one we sunk in Telok Awang!"

"No, I've abandoned that—except as a last hope that they might be using Telok Awang as one of their bases again. You see, if we go down to Telok Blongas, and spies of theirs along the coast happen to spot us, they'll begin nosing along our trail as soon as we leave. They're practically certain to discover our sub, where we have hidden her. Then we'd have two of 'em loose on the high seas instead of one. They'd thank us for that sort of a tip! Same way with the one we think is lying on the bottom with her plates shot out. If it was ours they discovered, they mightn't know where to submerge and hunt for the other one. "No! Our only safe game at present is to keep well away from the south coast of Lombok until we know a little more about what they've really got!"

"Well, but what's your idea about catching this pirate sub, Jim? Seems to me the British Government could ship thirty or forty secret-service men aboard the *Huamuong* when she sails as passengers—part of 'em in the saloon, part in second-cabin."

"**UNDOUBTEDLY**—but what of the U-boat? If it were only a question of handling trouble on the steamer herself, that's a very simple matter, provided the French company accepts our theory and takes the proper measures for defense. But the sub is a vastly different proposition. From everything we've seen of 'em so far, that crowd of Prussians are far too serious-minded and devilishly persistent for bluffing of any sort. They're so unscrupulous that anything like decency or playing the game in a sporting way doesn't enter into their calculations for one holy minute! That sub commander will give the French captain possibly an hour to get his entire crew and passengers into the boats. One feature which makes our theory highly probable is the fact that the *Huamuong* is actually equipped with enough boats to carry everyone aboard, according to the company's new policy. The pirates undoubtedly will have her full passenger and crew lists to check up. And you may gamble all you've got that if the whole lot aren't pulling away in the boats at the

expiration of the time given, the sub will sink that steamer without further argument, merely as proof that they mean business and are not to be fooled with next time. There will be women and children aboard that liner—also, mails. If the British or French secret-service aboard of her try to start something, they'll all go to the bottom. Not a doubt of it!"

"H-m-m—come to think of it, I reckon you're about right. Well? What sort of a proposition are *you* figuring on?"

"Taking passage on her myself, with one of you to back me up. You can flip a Straits dollar to see which goes."

"Why not all three of us?"

"Too many eggs in one basket. And I'm figuring on assistance from the *Bandarwallah* before we get through. My idea is for one of you to remain in command of her—follow the *Huamuong*, about fifty knots astern, keeping in touch but out of sight, and closing up at night so that you could see a lantern signal if we can't get anything to you by wireless."

"By thunder, Jimmy, that might work like a bird! Would you put the French company wise to that talk of Kragorovitch's with the woman, and how you've doped it out?"

"Provided there's any way of approaching them so it wont leak. I've a sort of idea that Lee Fong Yan might help us in that direction. How really powerful the organization which we think he has back of him really is, of course there's no possible way for a European or American to find out. But I'm pretty well convinced that it's more far-reaching than the British Government even dreams. Sir Robert Hart probably came as near to knowing as any Englishman who ever lived in the Orient—and he had sense enough, or valued his life enough, to keep his mouth shut concerning it."

NEXT morning, Medford sauntered into the Telok Ayer Street godown as if merely stopping for a social call, and asked if Mr. Lee Fong Yan had time for a few minutes' chat. The Number One Boy in the outer room of the big spice-scented warehouse was a diplomat; he had to be, in that job. His private instructions, for reasons known to every Asiatic of whatever caste, were to admit Mr. Medford at any time when the great Lee was not engaged with some other visitor. But, keeping in mind the casual stranger who might happen

in and be suspiciously observant, the Boy smilingly offered Medford a chair, a newspaper and a fan and trotted away to see if his employer was not too busy to receive him. These little customary formalities were a matter of less than five minutes, at the expiration of which the American was smoking a richly flavored cigar in the private office and asking questions which his Chinese friend had hopefully anticipated while talking with Major Worthington.

"Lee, how well do you know the Messageries people, here?"

"Personally, I've met only three or four of them, in Singapore and Saigon. But they are under obligations to some of our Chinese organizations—"

"I had an idea they might be. What I have in mind is this: Without going into details, I've reason to believe their boat, the *Huamuong*, is going to meet up with that pirate sub between here and Saigon. Larry Stevens and I have about decided to book passage on her just to see what happens—provided that we can have from the company sufficient authority to do pretty much anything we consider advisable."

"Suppose that Captain Desmoulin's has confidential instructions to accept whatever orders you may give during the voyage and carry them out with all the force at his command. That cover it?"

"It's more than I really hoped to get. But—"

"I think it can be obtained, if you insist upon going. Frankly, I think you've rendered the government and the shipping-companies a sufficiently valuable service in giving us this hint—if it proves well founded—without incurring further personal risk. Why not have a couple of destroyers meet the *Huamuong* twelve hours out and follow her, a few miles astern?"

"The destroyer lying off Collyer Quay is probably the only one near enough to do that. The minute she leaves in any direction, that sub will hear of it by wireless and be on the lookout for her; and the *Huamuong* will have a rather dull uneventful trip up the China Sea. But suppose for the sake of argument the destroyer does catch the U-boat red-handed. The Messageries boat will be sunk with all on board if it's the last thing the sub does—and we'll be as much in the dark concerning her secret base as we are now. What Stevens and I aim to do, if we're not

wiped out, is to locate that base so that the whole nest of 'em can be cleaned out.'

ON Saturday, the Messageries wharf in Keppel Harbor was gay with white dresses, parasols, turbans of many colors and gorgeous Hindu, Javanese and Siamese costumes. Each of the saloon passengers, apparently, had a number of friends down to see the boat pull out. An hour before sailing-time, the smiling and efficient Wun Hop, accompanied by a coolie from the *Bandarwallah's* crew, walked up the gangplank of the *Huamuong*, chattered for a moment with one of her deck-coolies, and then went below with the suitcases they carried. Without hesitation, they proceeded to a certain stateroom on the "B" deck, stowed the luggage, and whispered something to one of the saloon stewards which kept the intelligent Tonkinese within sight of that particular stateroom and the gangway leading to it until the steamer was clear of the harbor. Then Wun and his companion went ashore.

IN a stateroom on the "A" deck, a ruddy-faced man with uptilted mustaches sat on the transom methodically going over name after name on the *Huamuong's* passenger-lists by the light of the incandescent. A closed blind shut out any possibility of observation through the deck-window. How he obtained the copy would have puzzled the managers of the Messageries office in Singapore; but he had it, and the lists were corrected to within two hours of sailing-time. The names of Medford and Stevens, however, didn't appear.

This was no oversight upon the part of the booking-clerks, as they hadn't the remotest idea that the gentlemen were sailing. In fact, the first long whistle had already warned everyone ashore but the passengers when the two Americans, who had been chatting on the wharf with friends as if merely down to wish some one *bon voyage*, ran up the gangplank and disappeared through the saloon-companion while most of the passengers were lining the rail and waiving handkerchiefs. Ten minutes later, the steamer was feeling her way out of the harbor, past Pulau Brani.

It was not until the twenty or more seasoned voyagers came below for dinner that Miss Anastasia O'Meara glanced across the table and saw the two men seated at Captain Desmoulin's right, chatting with him in excellent French as if they were

old friends. A few minutes later, Madame Irma Vassilikoff—who had just been introduced, at the Purser's table, to Mr. Wilhelm Eisenach, as if they were strangers meeting for the first time—looked across the saloon and recognized the Americans with such nervous jolt that the spoon fell from her hand into her soup. Afterward, walking the deck with Eisenach, she took the first opportunity to ask in guarded tones:

"You went over every name on the saloon passenger-list didn't you, Baron? Of course! Were 'Medford' and 'Stevens' on it?"

"They were not. If you mean those two at the Captain's table, I saw them come aboard two minutes before the gangplank was hauled ashore, without any luggage whatsoever!"

"Oh, their luggage might have been fetched aboard by any of those coolies—that doesn't mean anything! Look! There's 'Stasia in the companionway. I'll introduce you as if we'd just met on board. She's at their table and may have picked up something!"

When appearance had been discounted by the superfluous introduction, Miss O'Meara led them to a corner on the upper deck and gave them her impressions.

"OF course I recognized Medford at once and knew his companion must be the chief engineer, Stevens, from descriptions I'd had. I don't think either had ever seen me before. Certainly they recognized nobody at our table, and their backs were toward Irma. Captain Desmoulin was saying as they sat down that, when the chief steward saw them coming aboard, he had had to find other seats for a couple who had talked of nothing but their personal affairs all the way down the Colombo. Medford explained that he had received a cable from Hongkong this morning in regard to a bit of speculation which looked so promising that they decided to run up at once and look into it. From the fact that Irma's name doesn't appear on the passenger-lists, and that he doesn't know the Baron or me, there would seem to be nothing to make him suspicious of anyone on board—no reason either for or against his taking this particular ship. As far as I can judge, his explanation to the Captain was literally true. The three were discussing the purchase and refitting of a Dutch steamer which has been libeled and

held in Hongkong by the Admiralty Court. Let me consider the situation a minute. Irma, has Medford any real proof that you tried to poison him or tried to have him killed on the street by a crowd of drunken sailors?"

"Probably not a suspicion concerning that attack under the arcades of the Boat Quay. But I was pouring tea, one afternoon at General Mount's bungalow. He saw me hand two cups to the General's Number One boy, for him and Kragorovitch, who refused his and passed it to Miss Haddon. She'd only taken a sip when the boy knocked it out of her hand. But the doctors worked all night to save her life. Of course the circumstantial evidence pointed to the Number One, Kragorovitch or me."

"H-m-m—it's practically impossible that either of them could have picked up a hint of our plans concerning this steamer—even more ridiculous to imagine they've had time to start anything which might block us. Unless— You think, Irma, that seeing you on board wont put him on his guard and make him try something by wireless?"

"Why should it? Even if he does suspect me, I couldn't possibly have known of his intention to sail in time to book a passage with the intention of killing him! Our being on the same boat is pure coincidence. But it's playing right into our hands, all the same! We don't really care what he thinks! There are enough of us on board to make sure that neither he nor Stevens ever gets ashore! There's certainly nothing they can do now to block our plans in this particular case; and they wont live to block any others. Even if they're good enough swimmers to keep afloat for several hours, it wont help them much in the middle of the China Sea!"

JUST before midnight, when most of the passengers had gone below or were stretched in deck-chairs along the gangway of the "B" deck, Medford and Stevens went up to the Captain's room, abaft the wheel-house. When they went in and closed the door, the second officer posted three quartermasters where they could see and stop anyone attempting to sneak up the bridge-ladders or the one on the after bulkhead. Captain Desmoulins had received his orders, with a confidential hint which made him only too pleased to carry them out. When they were comfortably

seated, with their cigars lighted, Medford took a thin package of tracings from his pocket and unfolded them.

"These are the builder's drawings of your boat, Captain—published in *Engineering* just after she was launched—and deck-plans, which I understand have not been changed in any way. Briefly, our idea is something like this: We expect that damned U-boat to show up close aboard of you day after tomorrow, when you leave the main Hongkong track for Saigon—probably in the early morning. As far as I can see, there's nothing you can do but take to your boats when they order it. You've no armament, and you stand a good chance of being sunk in a fight if you took that risk. As for us—we wont be with you. If we're seen about the ship tomorrow, we probably wont live to see another sunrise. One of your lady passengers has tried to snuff me out, twice. She undoubtedly has a dozen or more confederates aboard. We two are booked for Kingdom Come as surely as if our tickets were stamped and dated. So when we disappear, there may be some argument among them as to who did it. But we'll be unquestionably gone, and you'll be having the ship searched for us with a good deal of evident anxiety—"

"*Magnifique!* I think I see your so excellent scheme, m'sieur! You have in mind the place for hiding? *Oui?* And the list of provisions you have given me—they are to be for your refreshment while you are dead—*n'est-ce pas?* *Oui!* And the order which I receive for extra wireless installment which I have placed in position before my steamer arrives at le Singapore? It is to remain in the unused storeroom on the main-deck. *Oui?*"

"Precisely, *mon Capitaine!* It is understood, aboard, that nothing but broken parts and fittings from the engine-room are kept in that storeroom—it is practically the ship's 'scrap-pile,' as we say in America. Anyone pushing the door partly open would see at a glance that it is now blocked by the half of a broken gear which has fallen against it and that the place is full of just such useless junk. But these deck-plans and builders' drawings show a two-foot ventilator from the after-end of the engine-room passing through the place and the staterooms above it, on the 'B' and 'C' decks—one of which is just across the gangway from the room we now occupy. Your agents never book any passengers in

the staterooms through which that ventilator goes because the noises echoing inside of it would make it impossible for them to sleep. So there are porcelain signs over the doors: 'Assistant Steward' on the 'C' deck—'Stewardess' on the one above. Occasionally they are slept in, but not unless the ship is overcrowded. Generally they are used as linen and blanket closets. Well—to approach the *mouton*. Within the next hour or two, holes must be cut in the side of that ventilator in the storeroom and 'B' deck stateroom by one or more of your engineers whom you can trust. Then they will bend sheets of galvanized iron around the ventilator so as to make enveloping shields which conceal the holes, and cover them with white enamel paint like the pipe itself. When that has been done, a rope must be fastened to the iron cross-bars just below the hood—a piece long enough to hang down inside the pipe through all three decks. You had the connections made from that wireless set, and storage-battery, so that it cuts in between the regular wireless-room, up here, and the aërials?"

"*Oui, m'sieur*. And my electrician is an excellent workman. The connections have been concealed behind moldings so they can't be discovered without a search—"

"Which probably wont be made. When I cut out their instrument with the extra loop and switch that I specified, they'll figure they're having trouble with 'statio,' and wait a few minutes until their line seems to be in working order again. With that soundproof box around the sending-set in the storeroom, there's very little chance of anyone hearing our 'spark.' But I'll throw some of those spare awnings over it to make sure. H-m-m—I can't seem to think of anything else, Captain. When we go out of this cabin, you probably wont see us again until we meet under pleasanter conditions ashore. Of course, there is the chance that we may lose out in the gamble. If the boat is torpedoed, for some boche reason that we can't anticipate, we'll go down with her before we can get out. But if we've guessed right, she wont be torpedoed."

EXAMINATION of the *Huamuong's* lists for reasons not remotely connected with the company's business had not been confined to the conspirators. The Singapore agent of the line had very carefully gone over them in a private interview

with Mr. Lee Fong Yan an hour before sailing-time. They had checked up, between them, every man or woman concerning whom any information was available. Some half-dozen were known to Lee's organization as being associated with people already under surveillance from the British Secret Service. Concerning eight more, there was no information whatever.

Before Medford had been aboard two hours, each of these fourteen had been pointed out to him by the chief steward without anyone noticing what they were up to, so that both of the Americans were looking for a sudden attack almost any time. They didn't relish the idea of being exterminated unresistingly, like a brace of rabbits.

As they came down from Demouslins' cabin, the Americans purposely sauntered aft along the port gangway of the "B" deck—which, being the weather side just then, was deserted. As they anticipated, their enemies had posted themselves in various places where Medford and Stevens might pass on the way to their room, no matter where they came from. By the light of a single incandescent, they saw two men at the after-end of the gangway. Apparently, the supposed victims were anticipating no trouble with anyone. But when the two pirates sprang forward, they were met with terrific blows which sent them reeling against the rail. Before they could fairly recover, they were seized by the legs and thrown overboard just as the ship was righting herself from a heavy sea. Clawing desperately at the steel plates, they were sucked down and under the next wave. Then, there being no one else to molest them on that side of the deck, Medford and Stevens regained their room unobserved.

As they locked their door, they could hear two of the assistant engineers working at the ventilator in the linen-room across the gangway. Some time later, a light tapping warned them that the job was completed, and that men were posted in the main gangway to prevent any passenger from approaching their room before morning.

Taking from their suitcases only what might be actually needed, they stepped across the little branch gangway into the linen-room and closed the door. Pulling away the galvanized-iron shield which had been fitted around the ventilator, Medford got into it through the hole in its side and

lowered himself to the storeroom hole two decks below. As Stevens followed, he pulled back the galvanized-iron shield until it again fitted snugly around the ventilator. In the storeroom, they piled heavy fragments of broken machinery in such a way that the door could only be opened an inch or two and then banked old awnings along the sides until they made fairly comfortable bunks. In a corner under the port was a double-box containing the wireless "spark," "relay" and "detector"—other instruments being screwed to the top of the box. Another chest was filled with an ample supply of provisions, and there was a cask of excellent drinking-water.

IF the events of the next week could be told in detail, they would make another story. The U-boat appeared alongside, next morning, before breakfast, as punctually as if she had been running on schedule to meet them, after the passengers had been stirred up for two hours by a search for the missing Americans. There were also two other missing men who were never accounted for.

Obedying the submarine commander's orders because there was literally nothing else for him to do, the French captain transferred his passengers and crew to the boats and pulled away for Saigon. All of them eventually got ashore without serious mishap. And the *Huamuong*, handled by the ten pirates left aboard of her, with a few stokers which the U-boat had fetched along, was navigated under the Dutch flag and a change of name to one of the innermost lagoon-coves in the island of Sumbawa—followed, a few hours astern, by the little motor-ship, *Bandarwallah*.

On the voyage down, an uneasy feeling that she was haunted spread through the French liner. Occasionally, a ghostly figure was seen flitting along some dimly lighted gangway at night—a figure vaguely resembling one of the lost Americans. The modern Prussian is an atheist; but he is brought up on gnome and fairy legend. Deep inside of him is superstition in thick layers; and running all through is a yellow streak which shows at every turn. Try as they might, that crew failed to shake off the haunting terror which accompanied them, and by common consent, all but a shift of two watchmen hurried ashore when the prize was finally moored in the secret rendezvous.

Knowing the coast of Sumbawa as well as he did that of Lombok, Medford recognized the entrance to the big lagoon as they passed in, although he'd heard scraps of talk which gave him a fairly clear idea of where they were bound. In the storeroom—which none of the prize-crew had time to enter, as it happened—he had a number of Desmoulins' spare charts, so was able to see through its port exactly where they went and note the depths of water on the charts. When they finally reached what was evidently the secret base, it proved to be a narrow inlet, heavily wooded on both sides, with plenty of water except at the entrance, where there was a twenty-foot channel at high water less than two hundred feet wide.

WHEN the Bostonian saw this, he almost howled with satisfaction. For the U-boat had run up to the head of the inlet a few hours before them, to fill her oil-tanks, and the *Huamuong* had been moored for some reason—as a screen, probably—just inside the entrance. She was not anchored by her own cables to the bottom, but to big trees on the bank with coconut-fiber hawsers which held her broadside to the entrance.

That night the drowsy watchman, below, was knocked senseless by two dead men—and the sea-cocks turned wide open after a great hole had been smashed in her "main injection" with a fire-bar. The tide was sluggishly running out at the time, so that when the fo'c'stle lookout had been silenced and the stem and stern hawsers cut the *Huamuong* drifted slowly down to the entrance as she settled lower in the water, broadside to the channel. With ample time to make his calculations and carry them out, even Medford was amazed at their absolute success.

On the *Bandarwallah*, Sam Torrey had kept a man in the wireless-room every moment that he couldn't be there himself. But it was he who sat at the operating-desk with the receivers clamped over his ears when the last kick in Medford's storage battery sent a message faintly through the tropic air:

Swimming ashore Will stick around
somewhere Call British cruiser at
once *Neathshire* here *Hua-*
muong sunk across channel Masts
and funnels above water—look for them
. Sub at head of inlet Can't
get out Come get her.

Another story of the unusual adventures of the "Deep Water Men" will appear in an early issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

The Voice of the Pack



by
Edison Marshall

Part Three of a Great Serial Novel

(Events of the Earlier Installments)

DAN FAILING'S ancestors were pioneers, but he had lived his life in the cities; and in his early manhood the city exacted its toll; he would not live six months more, the doctor told him. Dan resolved to spend that time away from the turmoil of the cities; and he telegraphed out to the wilderness country of Oregon, to find a place to live. When old Silas Lennox found that Dan was the grandson of the famous pioneer Dan Failing the First, he took him into his own wilderness home.

There Dan made the acquaintance of Silas' son Bill and daughter Snowbird; there he made acquaintance with the forest and its creatures; there he began a fight for his life. And when Silas and Dan were attacked by a coyote suffering from hydrophobia, and Dan killed the creature at close range with the one remaining bullet in his rifle—then Silas, seeing Dan's instinct for rifle-shooting and forest-lore, proclaimed the young man a "throwback." "You're Dan Failing himself, come back to earth!" he shouted.

Among Lennox's neighbors was an unscrupulous group led by Bert Cranston.

learning of the defection of one of his followers, lay in wait and shot him, as he thought, dead. But his victim, crawling away through the underbrush, met death when he was attacked by a cougar that mistook him for a doe. Dan found his skeleton two months later. Meanwhile, Dan met Cranston and was driven into a fight, although he was still weak. He was saved from death by Snowbird, whom Bert thereupon cursed foully. This Dan vowed to avenge.

Near the end of the fall Silas Lennox fractured several bones in an accident. Snowbird, going for surgical aid through the forest at night, was trailed by the same cougar that had killed the man, and was found by Dan just before the cougar sprang. With his bare hands, Dan seized the animal and throttled it.

(The story follows in detail:)

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Lennox home, in the far wilderness of the Umpquaw Divide, looked rather like an emergency hospital for the first few days after Dan's fight with Whisperfoot. Its

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old sounds of laughter and talk were almost entirely lacking. Two injured men, and a girl recovering from a nervous collapse, do not tend toward cheer.

But the natural sturdiness of all three quickly came to their aid. Of course Lennox had been severely injured by the falling log, and many weeks would pass before he would be able to walk again. He could sit up for short periods, however, had the partial use of one arm, and could propel himself—after the first few weeks—at a snail's pace through the rooms in a rude wheel-chair that Bill's ingenuity had contrived. The great livid scratches that Dan bore on his body quickly began to heal; and before a week was done, he began to venture forth on the hills again. Snowbird had remained in bed for three days; then she had hopped out, one bright afternoon, swearing never to go back to it again. Evidently the crisp, fall air of the mountains had been a nerve- tonic for them all.

Of course there had been medical attention. A doctor and a nurse had motored up the day after the accident; the physician had set the bones and departed, and the nurse remained for a week, to see the grizzled mountaineer well on the way of convalescence. But it was an anxious wait, and Lennox's car was kept constantly in readiness to speed her away in case the snows should start. At last she had left him in Snowbird's hands and Bill had driven her back to the settlements in his father's car. The die was now cast as to whether or not Dan and the remainder of the family should winter in the mountains. The snow-clouds deepened every day, the frost was ever heavier in the dawns; and the road would surely remain open only a few days more.

Once more the three seemingly had the Divide all to themselves. Bert Cranston had evidently deserted his cabin, and was working a trap-line on the Umpquaw side. The rangers left the little station, all danger of fire past, and went down to their offices in one of the Federal buildings of one of the little cities below. Because he was worse than useless in the deep snows that were sure to come, one of the ranch-hands that had driven up with Bill rode away to the valleys the last of the livestock—the horse that Dan had ridden to Snowbird's defense. Nothing had been heard of Landry Hildreth, who used to live on the trail to the marsh—and both

Lennox and his daughter wondered why. There were also certain officials who had begun to be curious. As yet, Dan had told no one of the grim find he had made on his return from hunting. And he would have found it an extremely difficult fact to explain.

IT all went back to those inner springs of motive that few men can see clearly enough within themselves to know. Even the first day, when he lay burning from his wounds, he worked out his own explanation in regard to the murder mystery. He hadn't the slightest doubt that Cranston had killed him to prevent Hildreth's testimony from reaching the courts below. Of course any other member of the arson ring of hillmen might have been the murderer; yet Dan was inclined to believe that Cranston, the leader of the gang, usually preferred to do such dangerous work as this himself. If it were true, somewhere on that tree-clad ridge clues would be left. By a law that went down to the roots of life, he knew, no action is so small but that it leaves its mark. Moreover, it was wholly possible that the written testimony Hildreth must have gathered had never been found or destroyed. Dan didn't want the aid of the courts to find those clues. He wanted to work out the case himself. It got down to a simple matter of vengeance—Dan had his debt to pay and he wanted to bring Cranston to his ruin by his own hand alone.

While it is true that he took rather more than the casual interest that most citizens feel in the destruction of the forest by wanton fire, and had an actual sense of duty to do all that he could to stop the activities of the arson ring, his motives, stripped and bare, were really not utilitarian. He had no particular interest in Hildreth's case. He remembered him simply as one of Cranston's disreputable gang, a poacher and a fire-bug himself. When all is said and done, it remained really a personal issue between Dan and Cranston. And personal issues are frowned upon by law and society. Civilization has toiled up from the darkness in a great measure to get away from them. But human nature remains distressingly the same—and Dan's desire to pay his debt was a distinctly human emotion. Sometime a breed will live upon the earth that can get clear away from vengeance—from

that age-old code of the hills that demands a blow for a blow and a life for a life—but the time is not yet. And after all, by all the standards of men as men, not as read in idealistic philosophies, Dan's debt was entirely real. By the light held high by his ancestors, he could not turn his other cheek.

JUST as soon as he was able, he went back to the scene of the murder. He didn't know when the snow would come to cover what evidence there was. It threatened every hour. Every wind promised it. The air was sharp and cold, and no drop of rain could fall through it without crystallizing into snow. The deer had all gone, and the burrowing people had sought their holes. The bees worked no more in the winter flowers. Of all the greater forest creatures, only the wolves and the bear remained—the former because their fear of men would not permit them to go down to the lower hills, and the latter because of his knowledge that when food became scarce, he could always burrow in the snow. No bear goes into hibernation from choice. Wise old bachelor, he much prefers to keep just as late hours as he can—as long as the eating-places in the berry-thickets remain open. The cougars had all gone down with the deer, the migratory birds had departed, and even the squirrels were in hiding.

The scene didn't offer much in the way of clues. Of the body itself, only a white heap of bones remained, for many and terrible had been the agents at work upon them. The clothes, however, particularly the coat, were practically intact. Gripping himself, Dan thrust his fingers into its pockets, then the pockets of the shirt and trousers. All papers that would in any way serve to identify the murdered man, or tell what his purpose had been in journeying down the trail the night of the murder, had been removed. Only one explanation presented itself. Cranston had come before him, and searched the body himself.

Dan looked about for tracks. And he was considerably surprised to find the blurred, indistinct imprint of a shoe other than his own. He hadn't the least hope that the tracks themselves would offer a clue to a detective. They were too dim for that. The surprising fact was that since the murder had been committed immediately before the fall rains, the water

had not completely washed them out. The only possibility that remained was that Cranston had returned to the body after the week's rainfall. The track had been dimmed by the lighter rains that had fallen since.

But yet, it was entirely to be expected that the examination of the body would be an afterthought on Cranston's part. Possibly at first his only thought was to kill—and following the prompting that has sent so many murderers to the gallows—he had afterwards returned to the scene of the crime to destroy any clues he might have left and to search the body for any evidence against the arson ring.

DAN'S next thought was to follow along the trail and find Cranston's ambush. Of course it would be in the direction of the settlement from the body, as the bullet had entered from the front. He found it hard to believe that Hildreth had fallen at the exact spot where the body lay. Men journeying at night keep to the trail—and the white heap itself was fully forty feet back from the trail in the thickets. Perhaps Cranston had dragged it there to get it from the sight of anyone who might pass along the lonely trail again—and it was a remote possibility that Whisperfoot, coming in the night, had tugged it into the thickets for dreadful purposes of his own. Likely the shot was fired when Hildreth was in an open place on the trail; and Dan searched for the ambush with this conclusion in mind. He walked backward, looking for a thicket from which such a spot would be visible. Something over fifty yards down he found it; and he knew it by the empty brass rifle-cartridge that lay half buried in the wet leaves.

The shell was of the same caliber as Cranston's hunting rifle. Dan's hand shook as he put it in his pocket.

Encouraged by this amazing find, he turned up the trail toward Hildreth's cabin. It might be possible, he thought, that Hildreth had left some of his testimony—perhaps such rudely scrawled letters as Cranston had written him—in some forgotten drawer in his hut. It was but a short walk for Dan's hardened legs, and he made it before midafternoon.

THE search itself was wholly without result. But because he had time to think as he climbed the ridge, because as he strode along beneath that wintry sky

he had a chance to consider every detail of the case, he was able to start out on a new tack when, just before sunset, he returned to the body. This new train of thought had as its basis that Cranston's shot had not been deadly at once, that wounded, Hildreth had crawled himself into the thickets where Whisperfoot had found him. And that meant that he had to enlarge his search for such documents as Hildreth had carried to include all the territory between the trail and the location of the body.

It was possibly a distance of forty feet, and getting down on his hands and knees he looked for any breaking in the shrubbery that would indicate the path that the wounded Hildreth had taken. And it was ten minutes well rewarded, in clearing up certain details of the crime. His senses had been trained and sharpened by his months in the wilderness, and he was able to back-track the wounded man from the skeleton clear to the clearing on the trail where he had first fallen. But as no clues presented themselves, he started to turn home.

He walked twelve feet, then turned back. Out of the corner of his eye it seemed to him that he had caught a flash of white, near the end of a great, dead log beside the path that the wounded Hildreth had taken. It was to the credit of his mountain training alone that his eye had been keen enough to detect it, that it had been so faithfully recorded on his consciousness, and that, knowing at last the importance of details, he had turned back. For a moment he searched in vain. Evidently a yellow leaf had deceived him. Once more he retraced his steps, trying to find the position from which his eye had caught the glimpse of white. Then he dived straight for the rotten end of the log.

In a little hollow in the bark, on the under side of the log, some hand had thrust a little roll of papers. They were rain-soaked now, the ink had dimmed and blotted; but he realized their significance. They were the complete evidence that Hildreth had accumulated against the arson ring—letters that had passed back and forth between himself and Cranston, a threat of murder from the former if Hildreth turned State's evidence, and a signed statement of the arson activities of the ring by Hildreth himself. They were not only enough to break up the ring and send

its members to prison. With the aid of the empty shell and other circumstantial evidence, they could in all probability convict Bert Cranston of murder.

FOR a long time he stood with the shadows of the pines lengthening about him, his gray eyes in curious shadow. For the moment a glimpse was given him into the deep wells of the human soul; and understanding came to him. Was there no balm for hatred even in the moment of death? Were men unable to forget the themes and motives of their lives, even when the shadows closed down upon them? Hildreth had known what hand had struck him down. And even on the frontier of death, his first thought was to hide his evidence where Cranston could not find it when he searched the body, but where later it might be found by the detectives that were sure to come. It was the old creed of life for life. He wanted his evidence to be preserved—not that right should be wronged, but so Cranston could be prosecuted and convicted and made to suffer. His hatred of Cranston that had made him turn State's evidence in the first place had been carried with him down into death.

As Dan stood wondering, he thought he heard a twig crack on the trail behind him. He wondered what forest creature was still lingering on the ridges at the eve of the snows.

CHAPTER XIX

THE snow began to fall in earnest at midnight—great, white flakes that almost in an instant covered the leaves. It was the real beginning of winter, and all living creatures knew it. The wolf-pack sang to it from the ridge—a wild and plaintive song that made Bert Cranston, sleeping in a lean-to on the Ump-quaw side of the Divide, swear and mutter in his sleep. But he didn't really waken until Jim Gibbs, one of his gang, returned from his secret mission.

They wasted no words. Bert flung aside the blankets, lighted a candle, and placed it out of the reach of the night-wind. It cast queer shadows in the lean-to, and found a curious reflection in the steel points of his eyes. His face looked swarthy and deep-lined in its light.

"Well?" he demanded. "What did you find?"

"Nothin'," Jim Gibbs answered gutturally. "If you ask me what I found *out*, I might have somethin' to answer."

"Then"—and Bert, after the manner of his kind, breathed an oath—"what did you find out?"

His tone, except for an added note of savagery, remained the same. Yet his heart was thumping a great deal louder than he liked to have it. He wasn't amused by his associate's play on words. Nor did he like the man's knowing tone, and his air of importance. Knowing that the snows were at hand, he had sent Gibbs for a last search of the body, to find and recover the evidence that Hildreth had against him and which had neither been revealed on Hildreth's person nor in his cabin. He had become increasingly apprehensive about those letters he had written Hildreth and certain other documents that had been in his possession. He didn't understand why they hadn't turned up. And now the snows had started, and Jim Gibbs had returned empty-handed but evidently not empty-minded.

"I've found out that the body's been uncovered—and men are already searchin' for clues. And moreover—I think they've found them." He paused, weighing the effect of his words. His eyes glittered with cunning. Rat that he was, he was wondering whether the time had arrived to leave the ship. He had no intention of continuing to give his services to a man with a rope-noose closing about him. And Cranston, knowing this fact, hated him as he hated the buzzard that would claim him in the end, and tried to hide his apprehension.

"Go on. Blat it out," Cranston ordered. "Or else go away and let me sleep."

IT was a bluff; but it worked. If Gibbs had gone without speaking, Cranston would have known no sleep that night. But the man became more fawning. "I'm tellin' you, fast as I can," he went on, almost whining. "I went to the cabin, as you said. But I didn't get a chance to search it—"

"Why not?" Cranston thundered. His voice reëchoed among the snow-wet pines.

"I'll tell you why! Because some one else—evidently a cop—was already searchin' it. Both of us know there's nothin'

there anyway. We've gone over it too many times. After while he went away—but I didn't turn back yet. That wouldn't be Jim Gibbs. I shadowed him, just as you'd want me to do. And he went straight back to the body."

"Yes?" Cranston had hard work curbing his impatience. Again Gibbs' eyes were full of ominous speculations.

"He stopped at the body, and it was plain he'd been there before. He went crawling through the thickets, lookin' for clues. He done what you and me never thought to do—lookin' all the way between the trail and the body. He'd already found the brass shell you told me to get. At least it wasn't there when I looked, after he'd gone. You should 've thought of it before. But he found somethin' else a whole lot more important—a roll of papers that Hildreth had chucked into an old pine stump when he was dyin'. It was your fault, Cranston, for not gettin' them that night. You needn't 've been afraid anyone hearin' the shot and catching you red-handed. This detective stood and read 'em on the trail. And you know—just as well as I do—what they were."

"Damn you, I went back the next morning, as soon as I could see. And the mountain-lion had already been there. I went back lots of times since. And that shell aint nothing—but all the time I supposed I put it in my pocket. You know how it is—a fellow throws his empty shell out by habit."

Gibbs' eyes grew more intent. What was this thing? Cranston's tone, instead of commanding, was almost pleading. But the leader caught himself at once.

"I don't see why I need to explain any of that to you. What I want to know is this—why didn't you shoot and get those papers away from him?"

FOR an instant their eyes battled. But Gibbs had never the strength of his leader. If he had, it would have been asserted long since. He sucked in his breath, and his gaze fell away. It rested on Cranston's rifle, that in some manner had been pulled up across his knees. And at once he was cowed. He was never so fast with a gun as Cranston.

"Blood on my hands, eh—same as on yours?" he mumbled, looking down. "What do you think I want, a rope around my neck? These hills are big, but the arm of the law has reached up before, and it might

again. You might as well know I'm not goin' to do any killin's to cover up your murders."

"That comes of not going myself. You fool! If he gets that evidence down to the courts, you're broken the same as me."

"But I wouldn't get more'n a year or so, at most—and that's a heap different from the gallows. I did aim at him—"

"But you just lacked the guts to pull the trigger!"

"I did, and I aint ashamed of it. But besides—the snows are here now, and he wont be able to even get word down to the valleys in six months. If you want him killed so bad, do it yourself."

This was a thought indeed. On the other hand, another murder might not be necessary. Months would pass before the road would be opened, and in the meantime he could have a thousand chances to steal back the accusing letters. Perhaps they would be guarded closely at first, but by the late winter months they would be an old story, and a single raid on the house might turn the trick. He didn't believe for an instant that the man Gibbs had seen was a detective. He had kept too close watch over the roads for that.

"A tall chap, in outing clothes—dark-haired and clean-shaven?"

"Yes."

"Wears a tan hat?"

"That's the man."

"I know him—and I wish you'd punctured him. Why, you could've taken those papers away from him and slapped his face, and he wouldn't have put up his arms. And now he'll hide 'em somewhere—afraid to carry 'em for fear he meets me. That's Failing—the tenderfoot that's been staying at Lennox's. He's a lunger."

"He didn't look like no lunger to me."

"But no matter about that—it's just as I thought. And I'll get 'em back—mark my little words."

IN the meantime the best thing to do was to move at once to his winter trapping-grounds—a certain neglected region on the lower levels of the North Fork. If, any time within the next few weeks, Dan should attempt to carry word down to the settlements, he would be certain to pass within view of his camp. But he knew that the chance of Dan starting upon any such journey before the snow had melted was not one in a thousand. To be caught in the Divide in the winter means to be

snowed in as completely as the Innuits of upper Greenland. Simply no word could pass except by a man on snowshoes. Really there was no urgency about this matter of the evidence.

Yet if the chance did come, if the house should be left unguarded, it might pay him to make immediate search. Dan would have little reason for thinking that Cranston suspected his possession of the letters; he would not be particularly watchful, and would probably pigeonhole them until spring in Lennox's desk.

And the truth was that Cranston had reasoned out the situation almost perfectly. When Dan awakened in the morning, and the snow lay already a foot deep over the wilderness world, he knew that he would have no chance to act upon the Cranston case until the snows melted in the spring. So he pushed all thought of it out of his mind, and turned his attention to more pleasant subjects. It was true that he read the documents over twice as he lay in bed. Then he tied them into a neat packet, and put them away where they would be quickly available. Then he thrust his head out into the wind, and let the great snowflakes sift down on his face. It was winter at last, the season he loved.

He didn't stir from the house, that first day of the storm. Snowbird and he found plenty of pleasant things to do and talk about before the roaring fire that he built in the grate. He was glad of the great pile of wood that lay outside the door. It meant life itself, in this season. Then Snowbird led him to the windows, and they watched the white drifts pile up over the low underbrush.

When finally the snow-storm ceased, five days later, the whole face of the wilderness was changed. The buck brush was mostly covered, the fences were out of the sight, the forest seemed a clear, clean sweep of white, broken only by an occasional tall thicket and by the snow-covered trees.

WHEN the clouds blew away, and the air grew clear, the temperature began to fall. Dan had no way of knowing how low it went. Thermometers were not considered essential at the Lennox home. But when his eyelids congealed with the frost, and his mittens froze to the logs of firewood that he carried through the door, and the pine-trees exploded and cracked in the darkness, he was correct in his belief that it was very, very cold.

But he loved the cold and the silence and austerity that went with it. The wilderness claimed him as never before. The rugged breed that were his ancestors had struggled through such seasons as this, and passed a love of them to him, down through the years.

When the ice made a crust over the snow, he learned to walk on snowshoes. At first there were paining ankles, and endless floundering in the drifts. But between the fall of fresh snow and the thaws that softened the crust, he slowly mastered the art. Snowbird—and Dan never saw the full significance of her name until he saw her flying with incredible grace over the snow—laughed at him at first, and ran him races that would usually end in his falling headfirst into a ten-foot snowbank. She taught him how to skeep; and more than once she would stop in the middle of an earnest bit of pedagogy to find that he wasn't listening at all. He would fairly seem to be devouring her with his eyes, delighting in the play of soft pinks and reds in her cheeks, and drinking, as a man drinks wine, the amazing change of light and shadow in her eyes.

She seemed to blossom under his gaze. Not one of those short winter days went by without discovery of some new trait or little vanity to astonish or delight him—sometimes an unlooked-for tenderness toward the weak, often a sweet, untainted philosophy of life, or perhaps just a lowering of her eyelids in which her eyes would show lustrous through the lashes, or some sweeping, exuberant gesture startlingly graceful.

LENNOX wakened one morning with the realization that this was one of the hardest winters of his experience. More snow had fallen in the night, and had banked halfway up his windows. The last of the shrubbery—except for the ends of a few tall bushes that would not hold the snow—was covered, and the roofs of some of the lower outbuildings had somewhat the impression of drowning things, striving desperately to keep their heads above water. He began to be very glad of the abundant stores of provisions that overcrowded his pantry—savory hams and bacons, dried venison, sacks of potatoes and evaporated vegetables, and of course, canned goods past counting. With the high fire roaring in the grate, the season held no ills for them. But sometimes when

the bitter cold came down at twilight, and the moon looked like a thing of ice itself over the snow, he began to wonder how the wild creatures that wintered on the Divide were faring. Of course most of them were gone. Woof, long since, had grunted and mumbled his way into a winter lair. But the wolves, and possibly a few of the hardier, smaller creatures, remained.

More than once in those long winter nights their talk was chopped off short by the song of the pack on some distant ridge. Sometime, when the world is old, possibly a man will be born that can continue to talk and keep his mind on his words while the wolf-pack sings. But he is certainly an unknown quantity today. The cry sets in vibration curious memory chords, and for a moment the listener sees in his mind's eye his ancient home in an ancient world—Darkness and Fear and Eyes shining about the cave. It carries him back, and he knows the wilderness as it really is—and to have such knowledge dries up all inclination to talk as a sponge dries water.

Of course the picture isn't clear. It is a thing guessed at, a photograph in some part of an under-consciousness that has constantly grown more dim as the centuries have passed. Possibly sometime it will fade out altogether; and then a man may continue to discuss the weather while the Song shudders in at the windows from the ridge. But the world will be quite cold by then, and no longer particularly interesting. And possibly even the wolves themselves will then be tamed to play dead and speak pieces—which means the wilderness itself will be tamed. For as long as the wild lasts, the pack will run through it in the winter. They were here in the beginning, and in spite of constant war and constant hatred on the part of men, they will be here in the end. The reason is just that they are the symbol of the wilderness itself, and the idea of it continuing to exist without them is stranger than that of a nation without a flag.

IT wasn't quite the same song that Dan has listened to in the first days of fall. It had been triumphant then, and proud with the wilderness pride. Of course it had been sad then, but it was more sad now. And it was stranger, too, and crept further into the souls of its listeners. It was the song of strength that couldn't avail against the snow, possibly of cold and the

despair and courage of starvation. These three that heard it were inured to the wilderness; but a moment was always needed after its last note had died to regain their gayety.

"They're getting lean and they're getting savage," Lennox said one night, stretched on his divan before the fireplace. He was still unable to walk; but the fractures were knitting again and the doctor had promised that the summer would find him well. "If we had a dog, I wouldn't offer much for his life. One of these days we'll find 'em in a big circle around the house—and then we'll have to open up with the rifles."

But this picture appalled neither of his two young listeners. No wolf-pack can stand against three marksmen, armed with rifles and behind oaken walls.

Christmas came and passed, and January brought clear days and an ineffective sun shining on the snow. These were the best days of all. Every afternoon Dan and Snowbird would go out on their skees or on snowshoes, unarmed except for the pistol that Snowbird carried in the deep pocket of her mackinaw. "But why not?" Dan replied to Lennox's objection. "She could kill five wolves with five shots, or pretty near it, and you know wolves well enough that that would hold 'em off till we got home. They'd stop to eat the five. I have hard enough time keeping up with her as it is, without carrying a rifle." And Lennox was content. In the first place, the wolf-pack has to be desperate indeed before it will even threaten human beings; and knowing the coward that the wolf is in the other three seasons, he couldn't bring himself to believe that this point was reached. In the second, Dan had told the truth when he said that five deaths, or even fewer, would repel the attack of any wolf-pack he had ever seen. There was just one troubling thought—that he had heard, long ago and he had forgotten who had told him, that in the most severe winters the wolves gather in particularly large packs; and a quality in the song that they had heard at night seemed to bear it out. The chorus had been exceptionally loud and strong, and he had been unable to pick out individual voices.

THE snow was perfect for skeeing. Previously their sport had been many times interrupted by either the fall of fresh snow or a thaw that had softened the

snow-crust; but now every afternoon was too perfect to remain indoors. They shouted and romped in the silences, and they did not dream but that they had the wilderness all to themselves. The fact that one night Lennox's keen eyes had seen what looked like the glow of a camp-fire in the distance didn't affect this belief of theirs at all. It was evidently just the phosphorus glowing in a rotten log from which the winds had blown the snow.

Once or twice they caught glimpses of wild-life—once a grouse that had buried in the snow flushed from their path and blew the snow-dust from its wings, and once or twice they saw snowshoe rabbits bounding away on flat feet over the drifts. But just one day they caught sight of a wolf. They were on snowshoes—a particularly brilliant afternoon in the latter part of January.

It was a lone male, evidently a straggler from the pack, and it leaped from the top of a tall thicket that had remained above the snow. The man and the girl had entirely different reactions. Dan's first impression was amazement at the animal's condition. It seemed to be in the last stages of starvation: unbelievably gaunt, with rib-bones showing plainly even through the furry hide. Ordinarily the heavily furred animals do not show signs of famine; but even an inexperienced eye could not make a mistake in this case. The eyes were red, and they carried Dan back to his first adventure in the Oregon forest—the day he had shot the mad coyote. Snowbird thought of him only as an enemy. The wolves killed her father's stock; they were brigands of the worst order, and she shared the hatred of them that is a common trait of all primitive peoples. Her hand whipped back, seized her pistol, and she fired twice at the fleeing figure.

The second shot was a hit: both of them saw the wolf go to its side, then spring up and race on. Shouting, both of them sped after him.

In a few moments he was out of sight among the distant trees, but they found the blood-trail and munched over the ridge. They expected at any moment to find him lying dead; but the track led them on clear down the next canyon. And now they cared not at all whether they found him: it was simply a tramp in the out-of-doors; and both of them were young with red blood in their veins.

BUT all at once Dan stopped in his tracks. The girl sped on for six paces before she missed the sound of his snowshoes; then she turned to find him standing, wholly motionless, with eyes fixed upon her.

It startled her, and she didn't know why. A companion abruptly freezing in his path, his muscles inert, and his eyes filling with speculations, is always startling. When this occurs, it means simply that a thought so compelling and engrossing that even the half-unconscious physical functions, such as walking, cannot continue, has come into his mind. And it is part of the old creed of self-preservation to dislike greatly to be left out on any such thought as this.

"What is it?" she demanded.

He turned to her, curiously intent. "How many shells have you in that pistol?"

She took one breath and answered him. "It holds five and I shot twice. I haven't any others."

"And I don't suppose it ever occurred to you to carry extra ones in your pocket?"

"Father is always telling me to—and several times I have. But I'd shoot them away at target practice, and forget to take any more. There was never any danger—except that night with a cougar. I did intend to—but what does it matter now?"

"We're a couple of wise ones, going after that wolf with only three shots to our name. Of course by himself he's harmless—but he's likely enough to lead us straight toward the pack. And Snowbird—I didn't like his looks. He's too gaunt, and he's too hungry—and I haven't a bit of doubt he waited in that brush for us to come, intending to attack us—and lost his nerve the last thing. That shows he's desperate. I don't like him, and I wouldn't like his pack. And a whole pack might not lose its nerve."

"Then you think we'd better turn back?"

"Yes I do, and not come out any more without a whole pocket of shells. I'm going to carry my rifle, too, just as your father has advised. He's only got a flesh-wound. You saw what you did with two cartridges—got in one flesh-wound. Three of 'em against a pack wouldn't be a great deal of aid. I don't mean to say you can't shoot, but a jumping, lively wolf is worse than a bird in the air. We've gone over three miles; and he'd lead us ten miles further—even if he didn't go to the pack. Let's go back."

"If you say so. But I don't think there's the least bit of danger. We can always climb a tree."

"And have 'em make a beautiful circle under it! They've got more patience than we have—and we'd have to come down sometime. Your father can't come to our help, you know. It's the sign of the tenderfoot not to think there's any danger—and I'm not going to think that way any more."

THEY turned back, and munched in silence a long time.

"I suppose you'll think I'm a coward," Dan asked her humbly.

"Only prudent, Dan," she answered smiling. Whether she meant it, he did not know. "I'm just beginning to understand that you—living here only a few months—really know and understand all this better than I do." She stretched her arms wide to the wilderness. "I guess it's your instincts."

"And I do understand," he told her earnestly. "I sensed danger back there just as sure as I can see your face. That pack—and it's a big one—is close; and it's terribly hungry. And you know—you can't help but know—that the wolves are not to be trusted in famine times."

"I know it only too well," she said.

Then she paused and asked him about a strange grayness, like snow blown by the wind, on the sky over the ridge.

CHAPTER XX

BERT CRANSTON waited in a clump of exposed thicket on the hillside until he saw two black dots, that he knew were Dan and Snowbird, leave the Lennox home. He lay very still as they circled up the ridge, noticing that except for the pistol that he knew Snowbird always carried, they were unarmed. There was no particular reason why he should be interested in that point. It was just the mountain way always to look for weapons, and it is rather difficult to trace the mental processes behind this impulse. Perhaps it can be laid to the fact that many mountain families are often at feud with one another, and anything in the way of violence may happen before the morning.

The two passed out of his sight, and after a long time he heard the crack of

Snowbird's pistol. He guessed that she either had shot at some wild creature, or else was merely at target-practice—rather a common proceeding for the two when they were on the hills together. Thus it is to be seen that Cranston knew their habits fairly well. And since he had kept a close watch upon them for several days, it was to be expected.

He had no intention of being interrupted in this work he was about to do. He had planned it all very well. At first the intermittent snow-storms and the thaws between had delayed him. He needed a perfect snow-crust for the long tramp over the ridge; and at last the bright days and the icy dawns had made it. The elder Lennox was still helpless. He had noticed that when Dan and Snowbird went out, they were usually gone from two to four hours; and that gave him plenty of time for his undertaking. The moment had come at last to make a thorough search of Lennox's house for certain incriminating documents that Dan had found near the body of Landy Hildreth.

Really the only dangerous part of his undertaking was his approach. If by any chance Lennox was looking out the window, he might be found waiting with a rifle across his arms. It would be quite like the old mountaineer to have his gun beside him, and to shoot it quick and exceptionally straight without asking questions, at any stealing figure in the snow. Yet Cranston felt fairly sure that Lennox was still too helpless to raise a gun to a shooting position.

He had observed that the mountaineer spent his time either on the fireplace divan or on his own bed. Neither of these places were available to the rear windows of the house. So very wisely, he made his attack from the rear.

HE came stealing across the snow—a musher of first degree. Very silently and swiftly he slipped off his snowshoes at the door. The door itself was unlocked, just as he had supposed. In an instant more he was tiptoeing, a dark, silent figure, through the corridors of the house. He held his rifle ready in his hands.

He peered into Lennox's bedroom first. The room was unoccupied. Then the floor of the corridor creaked beneath his step; and he knew nothing further was to be gained by waiting. If Lennox suspected his presence, he might be waiting with

aimed rifle as he opened the door of the living-room.

He glided faster. He halted once more a moment at the living-room door to see if Lennox had been disturbed. He was lying still, however, so Cranston pushed through.

Lennox glanced up from his magazine to find that unmistakable thing, the barrel of a rifle, pointed at his breast. Cranston was one of those rare marksmen that shoot with both eyes open—and that meant that he kept his full visual powers to the last instant before the hammer fell.

"I can't raise my arms," Lennox said simply. "One of 'em wont work at all—besides, 'twould be against the doctor's orders."

Cranston stole over toward him, looking closely for weapons. He pulled aside the woolen blanket that Lennox had drawn up over his body and he pushed his hand into the cushions of the couch. A few deft pats, holding his rifle through the fork of his arm, finger coiled into the trigger-guard, assured him that Lennox was not "healed" at all. Then he laughed and went to work.

"I thought I told you once," Lennox began with perfect coldness, "that the doors of my house were no longer open to you."

"You did say that," was Cranston's guttural reply. "But you see I'm here, don't you? And what are you going to do about it?"

"I probably felt that sooner or later you would come to steal just as you and your crowd stole the supplies from the forest station last winter—and that probably influenced me to give the orders. I didn't want thieves around my house, and I don't want them now. I don't want coyotes, either."

"And I don't want any such remarks out of you, either," Cranston answered him. "You lie still and shut up, and I suspect that sissy boarder of yours will come back, after he's through embracing your daughter in the snow, and find you in one piece. Otherwise not."

"If I were in one piece," Lennox answered him very quietly, "instead of a bundle of broken bones that can't lift its arms, I'd get up off this couch, unarmed as I am, and stamp on your lying lips."

But Cranston only laughed, and tied Lennox's feet with a cord from the window-shade.

HE went to work very systematically. First he rifled Lennox's desk in the living-room. Then he looked on all the mantels, and ransacked the cupboards and the drawers. He was taunting and calm at first. But as the moments passed, his passion grew upon him. He no longer smiled. The rodent-features became intent, the eyes narrowed to curious, bright slits under the dark lashes. He went to Dan's room, searched his bureau drawer and all the pockets of the clothes hanging in his closet. He upset his trunk, and pawed among old letters in the suitcase. Then, stealing-like some creature of the wilderness, he came back to the living-room. Lennox was not on the divan where he had left him. He lay instead on the floor near the fireplace; and he met the passion-drawn face with entire calmness. His motives were perfectly plain. He had just made a desperate effort to procure Dan's rifle that hung on two sets of deer-horns over the fireplace, and was entirely exhausted from it. He had succeeded in getting down from the couch, though racked by agony, but he hadn't been able to lift himself up in reach of the gun.

Cranston read his intention in one glance. Lennox knew it, but he simply didn't care. He had passed the point where anything seemed to matter.

"Tell me where it is," Cranston ordered him. Again he pointed his rifle at Lennox's wasted breast.

"Tell you where what is? My money?"

"You know what I want—and it isn't money. I mean those letters that Failing found on the ridge. I'm through fooling, Lennox. Dan learned that long ago, and it's time you learned it now."

"Dan learned it because he was sick. He isn't sick now. Don't presume too much on that."

CRANSTON laughed with harsh scorn. "But that isn't the question. I said I've wasted all the time I'm going to. You are an old man and helpless; but I'm not going to let that stand in the way of getting what I came to get. They're hidden somewhere around this house. They wouldn't be out in the snow, because he'd want 'em where he could get them. By no means would he carry them on his person—fearing that some day he'd meet me on the ridge. He's a fool, but he aint that much of a fool. I've watched, and he's

had no chance to take them into town. I'll give you—just five seconds to tell me where they're hidden."

"And I give you," Lennox replied, "one second less than that—to go to hell!"

Both of them breathed hard in the quiet room. Cranston was trembling now—shivering just a little in his arms and shoulders. "Don't get me wrong, Lennox," he warned.

"And don't have any delusions in regard to me, either," Lennox replied. "I've stood worse pain, from this accident, than any man can give me while I yet live, no matter what he does. If you want to get on me and hammer me in the approved Cranston way, I can't defend myself—but you wont get a civil answer out of me. I'm used to pain, and I can stand it. I'm not used to fawning to a coyote like you, and I can't stand it."

But Cranston hardly heard. An idea flamed in his mind, and cast a red glamour over all the scene about him. It was instilling a poison in his nerves and a madness in his blood, and it was searing him, like fire, in his dark brain. Nothing seemed real. He suddenly bent forward, tense.

"That's all right about you," he said. "But you'd be a little more polite if it was Snowbird—and Dan—that would have to pay."

PERHAPS the color faded slightly in Lennox's face; but his voice did not change. "They'll see your footprints before they come in and be ready," Lennox replied. "They always come by the back way. And even with a pistol, Snowbird's a match for you."

"Did you think that was what I meant?" Cranston scorned. "I know a way to destroy those letters, and I'll do it—in the four seconds that I said, unless you tell. I'm not even sure I'm goin' to give you a chance to tell now—it's too good a scheme. There wont be any witnesses then, to yell around in the courts. What if I choose to set fire to this house?"

"It wouldn't surprise me a great deal. It's your own trade." Lennox shuddered once, on his place on the floor.

"I wouldn't have to worry about those letters then, would I! They are somewhere in the house, and they'd be burned to ashes. But that isn't all that would be burned. You could maybe crawl out, but you couldn't carry the guns, and you

couldn't carry the pantry full of food. You're nearly eighty miles up here from the nearest occupied house, with two pair of snowshoes for the three of you and one dinky pistol. And you can't walk at all. It would be a nice pickle, wouldn't it? Wouldn't you have a fat chance of getting down to civilization?"

The voice no longer held steady. It trembled with passion. This was no idle threat. The brain had already seized upon the scheme with every intention of carrying it out. Outside the snow glittered in the sunlight, and pine-limbs bowed with their load, overhung with that curious winter silence that once felt, returns often in dreams. The wilderness lay stark and bare, stripped of all delusion—not only in the snow world outside but in the hearts of these two men, its sons.

"I have only one hope," Lennox replied. "I hope, unknown to me, that Dan has already dispatched those letters. The arm of the law is long, Cranston. It's easy to forget that fact up here. It will reach you in the end."

Cranston turned through the door, into the kitchen. He was gone a long time. Lennox heard him at work: the crinkle of paper and then a pouring sound around the walls. Then he heard the sharp crack of a match. An instant later the first wisp of smoke came curling, pungent with burning oil, through the corridor.

"You crawled from your couch to reach that gun," Cranston told him when he came in. "Let's see you crawl out now."

LENNOX'S answer was a curse—the last dread outpouring of an unbroken will. He didn't look again at the glittering eyes. He scarcely watched Cranston's further preparations—the oil poured on the rugs and furnishings, the kindling placed at the base of the curtains. Cranston was trained in this work. He was taking no chances on the fire being extinguished. And Lennox began to crawl toward the door.

He managed to grasp the corner of the blanket on the divan as he went, and he dragged it behind him. Pain racked him, and smoke half blinded him. But he made it at last. And by the time he had crawled one hundred feet over the snow-crust, the whole structure was in flames. The red tongues spoke with a roar.

Cranston, the fire-madness on his face, hurried to the outbuildings. There he repeated the work. He touched a match

to the hay in the barn, and the wind flung the flame through it in an instant. The sheds and other outbuildings were treated with oil. And seeing that his work was done, he called once to the prone body of Lennox on the snow and munched away into the silences.

Lennox's answer was not a curse this time. Rather it was a prayer, unuttered—and in his long years Lennox had not prayed often. When he prayed at all, the words were burning fire. His prayer was that of Samson—that for a moment his strength might come back to him.

CHAPTER XXI

TWO miles across the ridges, Dan and Snowbird saw a faint mist blowing between the trees. They didn't recognize it at first. It might be fine snow, blown by the wind, or even one of those mysterious fogs that sometimes sweep over the snow.

"But it looks like smoke," Snowbird said.

"But it couldn't be. The trees are too wet to burn."

But then a sound that at first was just the faintest whisper in which neither of them would let themselves believe, became distinct past all denying. It was that menacing crackle of a great fire, that in the whole world of sounds is perhaps the most terrible. They were trained by the hills, and neither of them tried to mince words. They had learned to face the truth, and they faced it now.

"It's our house," Snowbird told him. "And Father can't get out."

She spoke very quietly. Perhaps the most terrible truths of life are always spoken in that same, quiet voice. Then both of them started across the snow, fast as their unwieldy snowshoes would permit.

"He can crawl a little," Dan called to her. "Don't give up, Snowbird mine. I think he'll be safe."

They mounted to the top of the ridge; and the long sweep of the forest was revealed to them. The house was a single tall pillar of flame, already glowing that dreadful red from which firemen, despairing, turn away. Then the girl seized his hands and danced about him madly.

"He's alive," she cried. "You can see him—just a dot on the snow. He crawled out to safety."

She turned and sped at a breakneck pace down the ridge. Dan had to race to keep up with her. But it wasn't entirely wise to mush so fast. A dead log lay beneath the snow with a broken limb stretched almost to its surface, and it caught her snowshoe. The wood cracked sharply, and she fell forward in the snow. But she wasn't hurt, and the snowshoe itself, in spite of a small crack in the wood, was still serviceable.

"Haste makes waste," he told her. "Keep your feet on the ground, Snowbird—the house is gone already and your father is safe. Remember what lies before us."

THE thought sobered and halted her. She glanced once at the dark face of her companion. Dan couldn't understand the strange luster that suddenly leaped to her eyes. Perhaps she herself couldn't have explained the wave of tenderness that swept over her—with no cause except the look in Dan's earnest gray eyes, and the lines that cut so deep. Since the world was new, it has been the boast of the boldest of men that they looked their Fate in the face. And this is no mean looking. For fate is a sword from the darkness, a power that reaches out of the mystery, and cannot be classed with sights of human origin. It burns out the eyes of all but the strongest men. Yet Dan was looking at his fate now, and his eyes held straight.

They walked together down to the ruined house, and the three of them sat silent while the fire burned red. Then Lennox turned to them with a half-smile.

"You're wasting time, you two," he said. "Remember all our food is gone. If you start now, and walk hard, maybe you can make it out."

"There are several things to do first," Dan answered simply.

"I don't know what they are. It isn't going to be any picnic, Dan. A man can travel only so far without food to keep up his strength, particularly over such ridges as you have to cross. It will be easy to give up and die. It's the test, man—it's the test."

"And what about you?" his daughter asked.

"Oh, I'll be all right. Besides—it's the only thing that can be done. I can't walk, and you can't carry me on your backs. What else remains? I'll stay here—and I'll scrape together enough wood to keep a fire. Then you can bring help."

He kept his eyes averted when he talked.

"How do you expect to find wood—in this snow?" Dan asked him. "It will take four days to get out—do you think you could lie here and battle with a fire for four days, and four days more that it will take to come back? You'd have two choices—to burn green wood that I'd cut for you before I left, or the rain-soaked dead wood under the snow. You couldn't keep either one of them burning, and you'd die in a night. Besides—this is no time for an unarmed man to be alone in the hills."

LENNOX'S voice grew pleading. "Be sensible, Dan!" he cried. "That Cranston's got us, and got us right. I've only one thing more I care about—that you pay the debt! I can't hope to get out myself. I say that I can't even hope to. But if you bring my daughter through, and when the spring comes, pay what we owe to Cranston, I'll be content. Heavens, son—I've lived my life. The old pack-leader dies when his time comes, and so does a man."

His daughter crept to him, and sheltered his gray head against her breast. "I'll stay with you then," she cried.

"Don't be a little fool, Snowbird," he urged. "My clothes are wet already from the melted snow. It's too long a way—it will be too hard a fight, and children—I'm old and tired. I'm tired out. I don't want to make the try—hunger and cold; and even if you'd stay here and grub wood, Snowbird, they'd find us both dead when they came back in a week. We can't live without food, and work and keep warm—and there isn't a living creature in the hills."

"Except the wolves," Dan reminded him.

"Except the wolves," Lennox echoed. "Remember, we're unarmed—and they'd find it out. You're young, Snowbird, and so is Dan—and you two will be happy. I know how things are, you two—more than you know yourselves—and in the end you'll be happy. But me—I'm too tired to make the try. I don't care about it enough. I'm going to wave you good-by, and smile, and lie here and let the cold come down. You feel warm in a little while—"

But she stopped his lips with her hand. And he bent and kissed it.

"If anybody's going to stay with you," Dan told them in a clear, firm voice. "it's going to be me. But aren't any of the cabins occupied?"

"You know they aren't," Lennox answered. "Not even the houses beyond the North fork, even if we could get across. The nearest help is over seventy miles."

"And Snowbird, think! Haven't any supplies been left in the ranger station?"

"Not one thing," the girl told him. "You know Cranston and his crowd robbed the place last winter. And the telephone lines were disconnected when the rangers left."

"Then the only way is for me to stay here. You can take the pistol, and you'll have a fair chance of getting through. I'll grub wood for our camp meanwhile, and you can bring help."

"And if the wolves come, or if help didn't come in time," Lennox whispered, passion-drawn for the first time, "who would pay what we owe to Cranston?"

"But her life counts—first of all."

"I know it does—but mine doesn't count at all. Believe me, you two. I'm speaking from my own desires when I say I don't want to make the fight. Snowbird would never make it through alone. There are the wolves, and maybe Cranston too—the worst wolf of all. A woman can't mush through those ridges four days without food, without some one who loves her and forces her on! Neither can she stay here with me and try to make green branches burn in a fire. She's got three little pistol balls—and we'd all die for a whim. Oh, please, please—"

Dan leaped for his hand with glowing eyes. "Listen, man!" he cried. "I know another way yet. I know more than one way, but one, if we've got the strength, is almost surer. There is an axe in the kitchen, and the blade will still be good."

"Likely dulled with the fire—"

"I'll cut a limb with my jackknife for the handle. There will be nails in the ashes, plenty of them. We'll make a rude sledge, and we'll get you out too."

LENNOX seemed to be studying his wasted hands. "It's a chance, but it isn't worth it," he said at last. "You'll have fight enough, without tugging at a heavy sled. It will take all night to build it, and it would cut down your chances of getting out by pretty near half. Remember the ridges, Dan—"

"But we'll climb every ridge—besides, it's a slow, down grade most of the way. Snowbird—tell him he must do it."

Snowbird told him, overpowering him with her enthusiasm. And Dan shook his

shoulders with rough hands. "You're hurting, boy!" he warned. "I'm a bag of broken bones."

"I'll tote you down there if I have to tie you in," Dan Failing replied. "Before, I've bowed to your will—but this time you have to bow to mine. I'm not going to let you stay here and die, no matter if you beg on your knees! It's the test—and I'm going to bring you through!"

He meant what he said. If mortal strength and sinew could survive such a test, he would succeed. There was nothing in these words to suggest the physical weakling that both of them had known a few months before. The eyes were earnest, the dark face intent, the determined voice did not waver at all.

"Dan Failing speaks!" Lennox replied with glowing eyes. He was recalling another Dan Failing of the dead years, a boyhood hero, and his remembered voice had never been more determined, more masterful than this he had just heard.

"And Cranston didn't get his purpose, after all." To prove his word, Dan thrust his hand into his inner coat pocket. He drew forth a little, flat package, half as thick and of the dimensions of a pack of cards. He held it up to them to see. "The thing Bert Cranston burned the house down to destroy," he explained. "I'm learning to know this mountain breed, Lennox. I kept it in my pocket where I could fight for it, at any minute."

Cranston had been mistaken, after all, in thinking that in fear of himself Dan would be afraid to keep the packet on his person, and would cravenly conceal it in the house. He would have been even more surprised to know that Dan had lived in constant hope of meeting Cranston on the ridges, showing him what it contained, and fighting him for it, hands to hands. And even yet, perhaps the day would come when Cranston would know at last that Snowbird's words, after the fight of long ago, were true.

The twilight was falling over the snow, so Snowbird and Dan turned to the toil of building a sled.

CHAPTER XXII

THE snow was steel-gray in the moonlight when the little party made their start down the long trail. Their preparations, simple and crude as

they were, had taken hours of ceaseless labor on the part of the three. The axe, its edge dulled by the flame and its handle burned away, had been cooled in the snow, and with his one sound arm, Lennox had driven the hot nails that Snowbird gathered from the ashes of one of the outbuildings. The embers of the house itself still glowed red in the darkness.

Dan cut the green limbs of the trees and planed them with his axe. The sled had been completed, handles attached for pushing it, and a piece of fence-wire fastened with nails as a rope to pull it. The warm mackinaws of both of them as well as the one blanket that Lennox had saved from the fire were wrapped about the old frontiersman's wasted body—Dan and Snowbird hoping to keep warm by the exercise of propelling the sled. Except for the dull axe and the half-empty pistol, their only equipment was a single charred pot for melting snow that Dan had recovered from the ashes of the kitchen.

The three had worked almost in silence. Words didn't help now. They wasted sorely needed breath. But they did have one minute of talk when they got to the top of the little ridge that had overlooked the house.

"We'll travel mostly at night," Dan told them. "We can see in the snow, and by taking our rest in the daytime when the sun is bright and warm, we can save our strength. We won't have to keep such big fires then—and at night our exertion will keep us as warm as we can hope for. Getting up all night to cut green wood with this dull axe in the snow would break us to pieces very soon, remembering that we haven't any food. I know how to build a fire even in the snow—especially if I can find the dead, dry heart of a rotten log—but it isn't any fun to keep it going with green wood. We don't want to have to spend any more of our strength stripping off wet bark and hacking at saplings than we can help—and that means we'd better do our resting in the heat of the day. After all—it's a fight against starvation, more than anything else."

"Just think," the girl told them, reproaching herself, "if I'd just shot straight at that wolf today, we could have gone back and got his body. It might have carried us through."

Neither of the others as much as looked surprised at these amazing regrets over the lost unsavory flesh of a wolf. They were

up against realities, and they didn't mince words. Dan smiled at her gently, and his great shoulder leaned against the traces.

THEY moved through a dead world. The ever-present manifestations of wild life that had been such a delight to Dan in the summer and fall were quite lacking now. The snow was trackless. Once they thought they saw a snowshoe rabbit, a strange shadow on the snow, but he was too far away for Snowbird to risk a pistol shot. The pound or two of flesh would be sorely needed before the journey was over, but the pistol cartridges might be needed still more. She didn't let her mind rest on certain possibilities wherein they might be needed. Such thoughts stole the courage from the spirit—and courage was essential beyond all things else to bring them through.

Once a flock of wild geese, stragglers from the main army of waterfowl, passed overhead on their southern migration. They were many months too late. They called down their eerie cries—that song that they had learned from the noise the wind makes, blowing over the bleak marshes. It wailed down to them a long time after the flock was hidden by the distant tree-tops, and seemed to shiver, with curious echoes, among the pines. Trudging on, they listened to its last note. And possibly they understood the cry as never before. It was one of the untamed, primitive voices of the wilderness, and they could realize something of its sadness, its infinite yearning and complaint. They knew the wilderness now, just as the geese themselves did. They knew its cold, its hunger, its remorselessness, and beyond all, the Fear that was bright eyes in the darkness. No man could have crossed that first twenty miles with them and remained a tenderfoot. The wild was sending home its lessons, one after another, until the spirit broke beneath them. It was showing its teeth. It was reminding them, very clearly, that in spite of houses built on the ridges and cattle-pens and rifles and all the tools and aids of civilization, it was still unconquerable.

Mostly the forest was heavily laden with silence. And silence, in this case, didn't seem to be merely an absence of sound. It seemed like a substance in itself, something that lay over the snow, in which all sound was immediately smothered and extinguished. They heard their own footfalls in the snow and the crunch of the sled. But the sound only went a little way. Once in

a long time distant trees cracked in the forest; and they all stood still a moment, trying to fight down the vain hope that this might be some hunter from the valleys who would come to their aid. A few times they heard the snow sliding, with the dull sound of a rolling window-shade, down from the overburdened limbs. The trees were inert with their load of snow.

AS the dawn came out, they all stood still and listened to the wolf-pack, singing on the ridge somewhere behind them. It was a large pack. They couldn't make out individual voices—neither the more shrill cry of the females, the yapping of the cubs nor the low, clear G-below-middle-C note of the males. "If they cross our tracks—" Lennox suggested.

"No use worrying about that now—not until we come to it," Dan told him.

The morning broke, the sun rose bright in a clear sky. But still they trudged on. In spite of the fact that the sled was heavy and broke through the snow-crust as they tugged at it, they had made good time since their departure. But now every step was a pronounced effort. It was the first dreadful beginning of fatigue.

"We'll rest now," Dan told them at ten o'clock. "The sun is so warm that we wont need much of a fire. And we'll try to get five hours' sleep."

"Too long, if we're going to make it out," Lennox objected.

"That leaves a work-day of nineteen hours," Dan persisted. "Not any too little. Five hours it will be."

He found where the snow had drifted against a great, dead log, leaving the white covering only a foot in depth on the lee side. He began to scrape the snow away, then hacked at the log with his axe until he had procured a piece of comparatively dry wood from its center. They all stood breathless while he lighted the little pile of kindling, and heaped it with green wood—the only wood procurable. But it didn't burn freely. It smoked fitfully, threatening to die out, and emitting very little heat.

But they didn't particularly care. The sun was warm above, as always in the mountain winters of Southern Oregon. Snowbird and Dan cleared spaces beside the fire and slept. Lennox, who had rested on the journey, lay on his sled and with his uninjured arm tried to hack enough wood from the saplings that Dan had cut to keep the fire burning.

At three they got up, still tired and aching in their bones from exposure. Twenty-four hours had passed since they had tasted food, and their unreplenished systems complained. There is no better engine in the wide world than the human body. It will stand more neglect and abuse than the finest steel motors ever made by the hands of European craftsmen. A man may fast many days if he lies in one place and keeps warm. But fasting is a deadly proposition while pulling sledges over the snow.

DAN was less hopeful now. His face told what his words did not. The lines cleft deeper about his lips and eyes; and Snowbird's heart ached when he tried to encourage her with a smile. It was a wan, strange smile that couldn't quite hide the first sickness of despair.

The shadows quickly lengthened—simply leaping over the snow from the fast-falling sun. Soon it dropped down behind the ridge; and the gray of twilight began to deepen among the more distant trees. It blurred the outline and dulled the sight. With the twilight came the cold, first crisp, then bitter and penetrating to the vitals. The twilight deepened, the snow turned gray—and then, in a vague way, the journey began to partake of a quality of unreality. It was not that the cold and the snow and their hunger were not entirely real, or that the wilderness was no longer naked to their eyes. It was just that their whole effort seemed like some dreadful, emburdened journey in a dream—a stumbling advance under difficulties too many and real to be true.

The first sign was the far-off cry of the wolf-pack. It was very faint, simply a stir in the eardrums, yet it was entirely clear. That clear, cold mountain air was like a perfect telephone system, conveying a message distinctly, no matter how faint. There were no tall buildings or cities to disturb the ether waves. And all three of them knew at the same instant it was not exactly the cry they had heard before.

They couldn't have told just why, even if they had wished to talk about it. In some dim way, it had lost the strange quality of despair that it had held before. It was as if the pack were running with renewed life, as if each wolf were calling to another with a dreadful sort of exultation. It was an excited cry too—not the long, sad song they had learned to listen for. It sounded immediately behind them.

They couldn't help but listen. No human ears could have shut out the sound. But none of them pretended that they had heard. And this was the worst sign of all. Each one of the three was hoping against hope in his very heart, and at the same time, hoping that the others did not understand.

FOR a long time, as the darkness deepened about them, the forests were still. Perhaps, Dan thought, he had been mistaken after all. . . . His shoulders straightened. Then the chorus blared again.

The man looked back at the girl, smiling into her eyes. Lennox lay as if asleep, the lines of his dark face curiously pronounced. And the girl, because she was of the mountains, body and soul, answered Dan's smile. Then they knew that all of them knew the truth. Not even an inexperienced ear could have any delusions about the pack-song now. It was that oldest of wilderness songs, the hunting-cry—that frenzied song of blood-lust that the wolf-pack utters when it is running on the trail of game. It had found the track of living flesh at last.

"There's no use stopping, or trying to climb a tree," Dan told the girl. "In the first place, your father can't do it. In the second, we've got to take a chance—for cold and hunger can get up a tree where the wolf-pack can't."

He spoke wholly without emotion. Once more he tightened the traces of the sled.

"I've heard that sometimes the pack will chase a man for days without attacking," Lennox told them. "It all depends on how long they've gone without food. Keep on, and try to forget 'em. Maybe we can keep 'em bluffed."

But as the hours passed, it became increasingly difficult to forget the wolf-pack. It was only a matter of turning the head and peering for an instant into the shadows to catch a glimpse of one of the creatures. Their forms, when they emerged from the shadows of the tree-trunks, were entirely visible against the snow. They no longer yapped and howled. They acted very intent and stealthy. They had spread out in a great wing, slipping from shadow and shadow, and what were their mental processes no human being may even guess. It was a new game; and they seemed to be seeking the best means of attack. Their usual fear of men, always their first emotion, had given way wholly to a hunting

cunning: an effort to procure their game without too great risk of their own lives. In the desperation of their hunger they could not remember such things as the fear of men. They spread out farther, and at last Dan looked up to find one of the gray beasts waiting, like a shadow himself, in the shadow of a tree not one hundred feet from her sled. Snowbird whipped out her pistol.

"Don't dare!" Dan's voice cracked out to her. He didn't speak loudly; yet the words came so sharp and commanding, so like pistol-fire itself, that they penetrated into her consciousness and choked back the nervous reflexes that in an instant might have lost them one of their three precious shells. She caught herself with a sob. Dan shouted at the wolf, and it melted in the shadows.

"You wont do it again, Snowbird?" he asked her very humbly. But his meaning was clear. He was not as skilled with a pistol as she; but if her nerves were breaking, the gun must be taken from her hands. The three shells must be saved to the moment of utmost need.

"No," she told him, looking straight into his eyes. "I wont do it again."

He believed her. He knew that she spoke the truth. He met her eyes with a half-smile. Then, wholly without warning, Fate played its last trump.

Again the wilderness reminded them of its might—and their brave spirits were almost broken by the utter remorselessness of the blow. The girl went on her face with a crack of wood. Her snowshoe had been cracked by her fall of the day before when running to the fire, and whether she struck some other obstruction in the snow, or whether the cracked wood had simply given way under her weight, mattered not even enough for them to investigate. As in all great disasters, only the result remained. The result in this case was that her snowshoe, without which she could not walk at all in the snow, was irreparably broken.

CHAPTER XXIII

"FATE has stacked the cards against us," Lennox told them, after the first moment's horror from the broken snowshoe.

But no one answered him. The girl, white-faced, kept her wide eyes on Dan. He seemed to be peering into the shadows

beside the trail, as if he were watching for the gray forms that now and then glided from tree to tree. In reality, he was not looking for wolves. He was gazing down into his own soul, measuring his own spirit for the trial that lay before him.

The girl, unable to step with the broken snowshoe, rested her weight on one foot and hobbled like a bird with broken wings across to him. No sight of all this terrible journey had been more dreadful in her father's eyes than this. It seemed to split open the strong heart of the man. She touched her hand to his arm.

"I'm sorry, Dan," she told him. "You tried so hard—"

Just one little sound broke from his throat—a strange, deep gasp that could not be suppressed. Then he caught her hand in his, and kissed it—again and again. "Do you think I care about that?" he asked her. "I only wish I could have done more—and what I have done doesn't count. Just as in my fight with Cranston—nothing counts because I didn't win. It's just fate, Snowbird. It's no one's fault—but maybe, in this world, nothing is *ever* anyone's fault." For in the twilight of those winter woods, in the shadow of death itself, perhaps he was catching glimmerings of eternal truths that are hidden from all but the most far-seeing eyes.

"And this is the end?" she asked him. She spoke very bravely.

"No!" His hand tightened on hers. "No, as long as an ounce of strength remains. To fight—never to give up—may God give me spirit for it till I die."

And this was no idle prayer. His eyes rose to the starry sky as he spoke.

"But son," Lennox asked him rather quietly, "what can you do? The wolves aren't going to wait a great deal longer—and we can't go on."

"There's one thing more—one more trial to make," Dan answered. I thought about it at first—but it was too long a chance to try if there was any other way. And I suppose you thought of it too."

"Overtaking Cranston?"

"Of course. And it sounds like a crazy dream. But listen—both of you. If we have got to die, up here in the snow—and it looks like we had—what is the thing you want done worst before we go?"

Lennox's hands clasped, and he leaned forward on the sled. "Pay Cranston!" he said.

"Yes!" Dan's voice rang. "Cranston's

never going to be paid unless we do it. There will be no signs of incendiarism at the house, and no proofs. They'll find our bodies in the snow, and we'll just be a mystery, with no one made to pay. The evidence in my pocket will be taken by Cranston, sometime this winter. If I don't make him pay, he never will pay. And that's one reason why I'm going to try to carry out this plan I've got.

"The second reason is that it's the one hope we have left. I take it that none of us are deceived on that point. And no man can die tamely—if he is a man—while there's a chance. I mean a young man, like me—not one who is old and tired. It sounds perfectly silly to talk about finding Cranston's winter quarters, and then, with my bare hands, conquering him, taking his food and his blankets and his snowshoes and his rifle to fight away these wolves, and bringing 'em back here."

"You wouldn't be barehanded," the girl reminded him. "You could have the pistol."

HE didn't even seem to hear her. "I've been thinking about it. It's a long, long chance—much worse than the chance we had of getting out by straight walking. I think we could have made it, if the wolves had kept off and the snowshoe hadn't broken. It would have nearly killed us—but I believe we could have got out. That's why I didn't try this other way first. A man with his bare hands hasn't much of a chance against another with a rifle—and I don't want you to be too hopeful. And of course, the hardest problem is finding his camp.

"But I do feel sure of one thing—that he's back to his old trapping line on the North Fork—somewhere south of here—and his camp is somewhere on the river. I think he would have gone there so that he could cut off any attempt I might make to get through with those letters. My plan is to start back at an angle that will carry me between the North Fork and our old house. Somewhere in there I'll find his tracks—the tracks he made when he first came over to burn up the house. I suppose he was careful to mix 'em up after once he arrived there, but the first part of the way he likely walked straight toward the house from his camp. Somewhere, if I go that way, I'll cross his trail—within ten miles at least. Then I'll back-track him to his camp."

"And never come back!" the girl cried.

"Maybe not. But at least everything that can be done, will be done. Nothing will be left. No regrets. We will have made the last trial. I'm not going to waste any time, Snowbird. The sooner we get your fire built the better."

"Father and I are to stay here?"

"What else can you do?" He went back to his traces, and drew the sled one hundred yards farther. He didn't seem to see the gaunt wolf that backed off into the shadows as he approached. He refused to notice that the pack seemed to be steadily growing bolder. Human hunters usually have guns that could blast and destroy from a distance; but even an animal intelligence could perceive that these three seemed to be without this means of inflicting death. A wolf is ever so much more intelligent than a crow—yet a crow shows little fear of an unarmed man and is wholly unapproachable by a boy with a gun. The ugly truth was simply that in their increasing madness and excitement and hunger, they were becoming less and less fearful of these three strange humans with the sled.

IT was not a good place for a camp. They worked a long time before they cleared a little patch of ground of its snow-mantle. Dan cut a number of saplings—laboriously with his axe—and built a fire with the comparatively dry core of a dead tree. True it was feeble and flickering, but as good as could be hoped for, considering the difficulties under which he worked. The dead logs under the snow were soaked with water from the rains and the thaws. The green wood that he cut smoked without blazing.

"No more time to be lost," Dan told Snowbird. "It lies in your hands to keep the fire burning. And don't leave the circle of the firelight without that pistol in your hand."

"You don't mean," she asked unbelievably, "that you are going to go out there to fight Cranston—unarmed?"

"Of course, Snowbird. You must keep the pistol."

"But it means death—that's all it means. What chance would you have against a man with a rifle? And as soon as you get away from this fire, the wolves will tear you to pieces."

"And what would you and your father do, if I took it? You can't get him into a tree. You can't build a big enough fire to frighten them. Please don't even talk

about this matter, Snowbird. My mind's made up. I think the pack will stay here. They usually—God knows how—know who is helpless and who isn't. Maybe with the gun, you will be able to save your lives."

"What's the chance of that?"

"You might—with one cartridge—kill one of the devils; and the others—but you know how they devour their own dead. That might break their famine enough that they'd hold off until I get back. That's the prize I'm playing for."

"And what if you don't get back?"

HE took her hand in one of his, and with the other he caressed, for a single moment, the lovely flesh of her throat. The love he had for her spoke from his eyes—such speech as no human vision could possibly mistake. Both of them were tingling and breathless with a great, sweet wonder.

"Never let those fangs tear that softness, while you live," he told her gently. "Never let that brave old man on the sled go to his death with the pack tearing at him. Cheat 'em, Snowbird! Beat 'em the last minute, if no other way remains! Show 'em who's boss, after all—of all this forest."

"You mean—" Her eyes widened.

"I mean that you must only spend one of those three shells, fighting off the wolves. Save that till the moment you need it most. The other two must be saved—for something else."

She nodded, shuddering an instant at a menacing shadow that moved within sixty feet of the fire. The firelight half blinded them, dim as it was, and they couldn't see into the darkness as well as they had before. Except for strange, blue-yellow lights, close together and two and two about the fire, they might have thought that the pack was gone.

"Then good-by, Dan!" she told him. And she stretched up her arms. "The thing I said—that day on the hillside—doesn't hold any more."

His own arms encircled her, but he made no effort to claim her lips. Lennox watched them quietly, in this moment of crisis not even pretending to look away. Dan shook his head to her entreating eyes. "It isn't just a kiss, darling," he told her soberly. "It goes deeper than that. It's a symbol. It was your word, too, and mine—and words can't be broken, things being as they are. Can't I make you understand?"

She nodded. His eyes burned. Perhaps

she didn't understand, as far as actual functioning of the brain was concerned. But she reached up to him, as women—knowing life in the concrete rather than the abstract—have always reached up to men; and she dimly caught the gleam of some eternal principle and right behind his words. This strong man of the mountains had given his word, had been witness to her own promise to him and to herself, and a law that goes down to the roots of life prevented him from claiming the kiss.

MANY times, since the world was new, comfort—happiness—life itself have been contingent on the breaking of a law. Yet in spite of what seemed common sense, even though there would be no punishment if it were broken, the law has been kept. It was this way now. It wouldn't have been just a kiss, such as boys and girls have always had in the moonlight. It meant the symbolic renunciation of the debt that Dan owed Cranston—a debt that in his mind might possibly go unpaid, but which no weight of circumstance could make him renounce.

His longing for her lips pulled at the roots of him. But by the laws of his being he couldn't claim them until the debt incurred on the hillside, months ago, had been paid; to take them now meant to dull the fine edge of his resolve to carry the issue through to the end, to dim the star that led him, to weaken him, by bending now, for the test to come. He didn't know why. It had its font in the deep wells of the spirit. Common sense can't reveal how the holy man keeps strong the spirit by denying the flesh. It goes too deep for that. Dan kept to his consecration.

He did, however, kiss her hands, and he kissed the tears out of her eyes. Then he turned into the darkness and broke through the ring of the wolves.

CHAPTER XXIV

DAN FAILING was never more thankful for his unerring sense of direction. He struck off at a forty-five degree angle between their late course and a direct road to the river, and he kept it as if by a surveyor's line. All the old devices of the wilderness—the ridge on ridge that looked just alike, inclines that to the casual eye looked like downward-slopes, streams that vanished beneath the

snow, and the snow-mist blowing across the face of the landmarks—could not avail against him.

A half-dozen of the wolves followed him at first. But perhaps their fierce eyes marked his long stride and his powerful body and decided that their better chance was with the helpless man and the girl beside the flickering fire. They turned back, one by one. Dan kept straight on and in two hours crossed Cranston's trail.

It was perfectly plain in the moonlit snow. He began to back-track. He headed down a long slope, and in an hour more struck the North Fork. He didn't doubt that he would find Cranston in his camp, if he found the camp at all. The man had certainly returned to it immediately after setting fire to the buildings, if for no other reason than for food. It isn't well to be abroad on the wintry mountains without a supply of food; and Cranston would certainly know this fact.

He didn't know when a rifle bullet, from some camp in the thickets, would put an abrupt end to his advance. The brush grew high by the river, the elevation was considerably lower, and there might be one hundred camps out of the sight of the casual wayfarer. If Cranston should see him, mushing across the moonlit snow, it would give him the most savage joy to open fire upon him with his rifle.

Dan's advance became more cautious. He was in a notable trapping region, and he might encounter Cranston's camp at any moment. His keen eyes searched the thickets, and particularly they watched the skyline for a faint glare that might mean a campfire. He tried to walk silently. It wasn't an easy thing to do with awkward snowshoes; but the river drowned the little noise that he made. He tried to take advantage of the shelter of the thickets and the trees. Then, at the base of a little ridge, he came to a sudden halt.

HE had estimated just right. Not two hundred yards distant, a campfire flickered and glowed in the shelter of a great log. He saw it, by the most astounding good-fortune, through a little rift in the trees. Ten feet on either side, and it was obscured.

He lost no time. He did not know when the wolves about Snowbird's camp would lose the last of their cowardice. Yet he knew he must keep a tight grip on his self-control, and not let the necessity of haste

cost him his victory. He crept forward, step by step, placing his snowshoes with consummate care. When he was one hundred yards distant he saw that Cranston's camp was situated beside a little stream that flowed into the river, and that he had built a large lean-to reinforced—like the mountaineer he was—with snowbanks. The fire burned at its opening. Cranston was not in sight; either he was absent from camp or asleep in his lean-to. The latter seemed the more likely.

Dan made a wide detour, coming in about thirty yards behind the construction. Still he moved with incredible caution. Never in his life had he possessed a greater mastery over his own nerves. His heart leaped somewhat fast in his breast; but this was the only wasted motion. It isn't easy to advance through such thickets without ever a misstep, without the rustle of a branch or the crack of a twig. Certain of the wild creatures find it easy; but men have forgotten how in too many centuries of cities and farms. It is hardly a human quality; and a spectator would have found a rather ghastly fascination in watching the lithe motions, the passionless face, the hands that didn't shake at all. But there were no spectators—unless the little band of wolves, stragglers from the pack that had gathered on the hills behind—watched with lighted eyes.

Dan went down at full length upon the snow and softly removed his snowshoes. They would only be an impediment in the close work that was sure to follow. He slid along the snow crust, clear to the mouth of the lean-to.

THE moonlight poured through, and showed the interior with rather remarkable plainness. Cranston was sprawled, half sitting, half lying on a tree-bough pallet near the rear wall. There was not the slightest doubt of the man's wakefulness. Dan heard him stir, and once—as if at memory of his deed of the day before—he cursed in a savage whisper. Although he was facing the opening of the lean-to, he was wholly unaware of Dan's presence. The latter had thrust his head at the side of the opening, and it was in shadow. Cranston seemed to be watching the great, white snow-fields that lay in front—and for a moment Dan was at loss to explain this seeming vigil. Then he understood. The white field before him was part of the long ridge that the three of them would pass on

the way to the valleys. Cranston had evidently anticipated that the girl and the man would attempt to march out—even if he hadn't guessed they would try to take the helpless Lennox with them—and he wished to be prepared for emergencies. There might be sport to have with Dan, unarmed as he was. And his eyes were full of strange conjectures in regard to Snowbird. Both would be exhausted now, and helpless. . . .

Dan's eyes encompassed the room—the piles of provisions heaped against the wall, the snowshoes beside the pallet, but most of all he wished to locate Cranston's rifle. Success or failure hung on that! He couldn't find it at first. Then he saw the glitter of its barrel in the moonlight—leaning against a grub-box possibly six feet from Cranston and ten from himself.

His heart leaped. The best he had hoped for—for the sake of Snowbird, not himself—was that he would be nearer to the gun than Cranston and would be able to seize it first. But conditions could be greatly worse than they were. If Cranston had actually had the weapon in his hands, the odds of battle would have been frightful against Dan. It takes a certain length of time to seize, swing, and aim a rifle; and Dan felt that while he would be unable to reach it himself, Cranston could not procure it either without giving Dan an opportunity to leap upon him. In all his dreams, through the months of preparation, he had pictured it thus. It was the test at last.

The gun might be loaded, and still—in these days of safety devices—unready to fire; and the loss of a fraction of a second might enable Cranston to reach his knife. Thus he felt justified in ignoring the gun altogether and trusting—as he had almost desired—to a battle of hands. And he wanted both hands free when he made his attack.

IF Dan had been erect upon his feet, his course would have been an immediate leap on the shoulders of his adversary, running the risk of Cranston reaching his hunting-knife in time. But the second that he would require to get to his feet would entirely offset this advantage. Cranston could spring up too. So he did the next most disarming thing.

He sprang up, and strode into the lean-to. "Good evening, Cranston," he said pleasantly.

Cranston was also upon his feet, the

same instant. His instincts were entirely true. He knew if he leaped for his rifle, Dan would be upon his back in an instant and he would have no chance to use it. His training, also, had been that of the hills, and his reflexes flung him erect upon his feet at the same instant that he saw the leap of his enemy's shadow. They brought up face to face. The rifle was now out of the running, as they were at about equal distances from it and neither would have time to swing or aim it.

His sudden appearance had been so utterly unlooked for, that for a moment Cranston could find no answer. His eyes moved to the rifle, then to his belt where hung his hunting-knife, that still lay on the pallet. "Good evening, Failing," he replied, trying his hardest to fall into that strange spirit of nonchalance with which brave men have so often met their adversaries, and which Dan had now. "I'm surprised to see you here. What do you want?"

Dan's voice when he replied was no more warm than the snowbanks that reinforced the lean-to. "I want your rifle—also your snowshoes and your supplies of food. And I think I'll take your blankets, too."

"And I suppose you mean to fight for them?" Cranston asked. His lips drew up in a smile, but there was no smile in the tone of his words.

"You're right," Dan told him—and he stepped nearer. "Not only for that, Cranston. We're face to face at last—hands to hands. I've got a knife in my pocket, but I'm not even going to bring it out. It's hands to hands—you and I—until everything's square between us."

"Perhaps you've forgotten that day on the ridge?" Cranston asked. "You haven't any woman to save you this time."

"I remember the day—and that's part of the debt. The thing you did yesterday is part of it too. It's all to be settled at last, Cranston—and I don't believe I could spare you if you went to your knees before me. You've got a clearing out by the fire—big as a prize ring. We'll go out there—side by side. And hands to hands we'll settle all these debts we have between us—with no rules of fighting and no mercy in the end!"

THEY measured each other with their eyes. Once more Cranston's gaze stole to his rifle, but lunging out, Dan kicked it three feet farther into the shadows of the

lean-to. Dan saw the dark face drawn with passion, the hands clenching, the shoulder-muscles growing into hard knots. And Cranston looked and knew that vengeance—that age-old sin and Christless creed by which he lived—had followed him down and was clutching him at last.

He saw it in the position of the stalwart form before him, the clear level eyes that the moonlight made bright as steel, the hard lines, the slim, powerful hands. He could read it in the tones of the voice—tones that he himself could not imitate or pretend. The hour had come for the settling of old debts.

He tried to curse his adversary as a weakling and a degenerate—but the obscene words he sought for would not come to his lips. Here was his fate, and because the darkness always fades before the light, and the courage of wickedness always breaks before the courage of righteousness, Cranston was afraid to look it in the face. The fear of defeat, of death, of Heaven knows what remorselessness with which this grave giant would administer justice, was upon him, and his heart seemed to freeze in his breast. Cravenly he leaped for his knife on the blankets below him.

Dan was upon him before he ever reached it. He sprang as a cougar springs, incredibly fast and with shattering power. Both went down, and for a long time they writhed and struggled in each other's arms. The pine-boughs rustled strangely.

The dark, gaunt hand reached in vain for the knife. Some resistless power seemed to be holding his wrist, and was bending its bone as an Indian bends a bow. Pain lashed through him. . . . And then this dark-hearted man, who had never known the meaning of mercy, opened his lips to scream that this terrible enemy be merciful to him.

But the words wouldn't come. A ghastly weight had come at his throat, and his tortured lungs sobbed for breath. Then, for a long time, there was a curious pounding, lashing sound in the evergreen boughs. It seemed merciless and endless.

But Dan got up at last, in a strange, heavy silence, and swiftly went to work. He took the rifle and filled it with cartridges from Cranston's belt. Then he put the remaining two boxes of shells into his shirt-pocket. The supplies of food—the sack of nutritious jerked venison like dried bark, the little package of cheese, the boxes of hardtack and one of small sacks of pre-

pared flour, he tied, with a single kettle, into his heavy blankets and flung them with the rifle upon his back. Finally he took the pair of snowshoes from the floor. He worked coldly, swiftly, all the time munching at a piece of jerked venison. When he had finished, he walked to the door of the lean-to.

It seemed to Dan that Cranston whispered faintly from his unconsciousness, as he passed; but the victor did not turn to look. The snowshoes crunched away into the darkness. On the hill behind a half-dozen wolves—stragglers from the pack—frisked and leaped about in a curious way. A strange smell had reached them on the wind, and when the loud, fearful steps were out of hearing it might pay them to creep down, one by one, and investigate its cause.

CHAPTER XXV

THE gray circle about the fire was growing impatient. Snowbird waited to the last instant before she admitted this fact. But it is possible only so long to deny the truth of a thing that all the senses verify, and that moment for her was past.

At first the wolves had lingered in the deepest shadow, and were only visible in profile against the gray snow. But as the night wore on, they became increasingly careless about it. They crept up to the very edge of the little circle or firelight; and when a high-leaping flame threw a gleam over them, they didn't shrink. She had only to look up to see that age-old circle of fire—bright dots, two and two, at every side.

It is an instinct in the hunting creatures to remain silent before the attack. The triumph-cries come afterward. But they seemed no longer anxious about this, either. Sometimes she would hear their footfall as they leaped in the snow—and what excitement stirred them, she didn't dare to think. Quite often one of them would snarl softly—a strange sound in the darkness.

She noticed that when she went to her hands and knees, laboriously to cut a piece of the drier wood from the rain-soaked, rotted snag that was her principal supply of fuel, every wolf would leap forward, only to draw back when she stood straight again. At such times she saw them perfectly plain—their gaunt bodies,

their eyes lighted with the insanity of famine, their ivory fangs that glistened in the firelight. She worked desperately to keep the fire burning bright. She dared not neglect it for a moment. Except for the single pistol ball that she could afford to expend on the wolves—of the three she had—the fire was her last defense.

But it was a losing fight. The rain-soaked wood smoked without flame; the comparatively dry core with which Dan had started the fire had burned down; and the green wood, hacked with such heart-breaking difficulty from the saplings that Dan had cut, needed the most tireless attention to burn at all.

WHEN Dan had gone, these little trees were well within the circle of the wolves. Unfortunately, the circle had drawn in past them. Nevertheless, now that the last of the drier dead wood was consumed, she shouldered her axe and walked straight toward the gray, crouching bodies in the snow. For a tragic second she thought that the nearest of them was going to stand its ground. But almost when she was in striking range, and its body was sinking to the snow in preparation for a leap, it skulked back into the shadow. Exhausted as she was, it seemed to her that she chopped endlessly to cut away one little length. The blade was dull, the handle awkward in her hand, she could scarcely stand on her broken snowshoes, and worse, the ice-crust broke beneath her blows, burying the sapling in the snow. She noticed that every time she bent to strike a blow, the circle would plunge a step nearer her, withdrawing as she straightened again.

Books of woodcraft often describe with what ease a fire may be built and maintained in wet snow. It works fairly well in theory, but it is a heartbreaking task in practice. Under such difficulties as she worked, it became one of those dreadful undertakings that partake of a nightmare quality—the walking of a treadmill or the sweeping of waves from the shore.

When she secured the first length, her fire was almost extinguished. It threw a faint cloud of smoke into the air, but the flame was almost gone. The darkness dropped about her, and the wolves came stealing over the snow. She worked furiously, with the strength of desperation, and little by little she won back a tiny flame.

Her nervous vitality was flowing from her in a frightful stream. Too long she had toiled without food in the constant presence of danger, and she was very near indeed to utter exhaustion. But at the same time she knew she must not faint. That was one thing she could not do—to fall unconscious before the last of her three cartridges was expended in the right way.

A GAIN she went forth to the sapling, and this time it seemed to her that if she simply tossed the axe through the air, she could fell one of the gray crowd. But when she stooped to pick it up— She didn't finish the thought. She turned to coax the fire. And then she leaned sobbing over the sled.

"What's the use?" she cried. "He wont come back. What's the use of fighting?"

"There's always use of fighting," her father told her. He seemed to speak with difficulty, and his face looked strange and white. The cold and the exposure were having their effect on his weakened system; and unconsciousness was a near shadow indeed. "But dearest—if I could only make you do what I want you to—"

"What?"

"You're able to climb a tree, and if you'd take these coats, you wouldn't freeze by morning. If you'd only have the strength—"

"And see you torn to pieces!"

"I'm old, dear—and very tired—and I'd crawl away into the shadows, where you couldn't see. There's no use mincing words, Snowbird. You're a brave girl—always have been since a little thing, as God is my judge—and you know we must face the truth. Better one of us die than both. And I promise—I'll never feel their fangs. And I wont take your pistol with me either."

Her thought flashed to the clasp hunting-knife that he carried in his pocket. But her eyes lighted, and she bent and kissed him. And the wolves leaped forward even at this.

"We'll stay it out," she told him. "We'll fight it to the last—just as Dan would want us to do. Besides—it would only mean the same fate for me, in a little while. I couldn't cling up there forever—and Dan wont come back."

SHE was wholly unable to gain on the fire. Only by dint of the most heart-breaking toil was she able to secure any

dry fuel for it at all. Every length of wood she cut had to be scraped of bark, and half the time the fire was only a sickly column of white smoke. It became increasingly difficult to swing the axe. The trail was almost at its end.

The after-midnight hours drew one by one across the face of the wilderness, and she thought that the deepening cold pre-saged dawn. Her fingers were numb. Her nerve control was breaking—she could no longer drive a straight blow with the axe. The number of the wolves seemed to be increasing; every way she looked she could see them leaping. . . . Or was this just hysteria? Surely the battle could go on but a few moments more. . . . The wolves themselves, sensing dawn, were losing the last of their cowardice.

Once more she went to one of the saplings; but she stumbled and almost went to her face at the first blow. It was the instant that her gray watchers had been waiting for. The wolf that stood nearest leaped—a gray streak out of the shadow; and every wolf in the pack shot forward with a yell. It was a short, expectant cry—but it chopped off short. For with a half-sob, and seemingly without mental process she aimed her pistol and fired.

A fast-leaping wolf is one of the most difficult pistol targets that can be imagined. It bordered on the miraculous that she did not miss him altogether. Her nerves were torn, their control over her muscles largely gone. Yet the bullet coursed down through the lungs, inflicting a mortal wound.

The wolf had leaped for her throat; but he fell short. She staggered from a blow, and she heard a curious sound in the region of her hip. But she didn't know that the fangs had gone home in her soft flesh. The wolf rolled on the ground; and if her pistol had possessed the shocking power of a rifle, he would have never got up again. As it was, he shrieked once, then sped off in the darkness to die. Five or six of the nearest wolves, catching the smell of its blood, bayed and sped after it.

But the remainder of the great pack—fully fifteen of the gray creatures—came stealing across the snow toward her. White fangs had gone home; and a new madness was in the air.

STRAINING into the silence, a perfectly straight line between Cranston's camp and Snowbird's, Dan Failing came mushing across the snow. His sense of direction

had never been obliged to stand a test like this before. Snowbird's fire was a single dot on a vast plateau; yet he had gone straight toward it.

He was risking everything for the sake of speed. He gave no heed to the fallen timber that might have torn the web of his snowshoes to shreds. Because he shut out all thought of it, he had no feeling of fatigue. The fight with Cranston had been a furious strain on muscle and nerve; but he scarcely remembered it now. His whole purpose was to return to Snowbird before the wolves lost the last of their cowardice.

The jerked venison that he had munched had brought him back much of his strength. He was wholly unconscious of his heavy pack. Never did he glide so swiftly, so softly, with such unerring step; and it was nothing more or less than a perfect expression of the iron-clad control that his steel nerves had over his muscles.

Then, through the silence, he heard the shout of the pack as the wolf had leaped at Snowbird. He knew what it meant. The wolves were attacking then, and a great flood of black, hating bitterness poured over him at the thought he had been too late. It had all been in vain—and before the thought could fully go home, he heard the dim, far-off crack of his pistol.

Was that the first of the three shots, the one she might expend on the wolves, or had the first two already been spent and she was taking the last gateway of escape. Perhaps even now Lennox was lying still on the sled, and she was standing before the ruin of her fire, praying that her soul might have wings. He shouted with all the power of his lungs across the snow.

BUT Snowbird only heard the soft glide of the wolves in the snow. The wind was blowing toward Dan; and while he had heard the loud chorus of the pack, one of the most far-carrying cries, and the penetrating crack of a pistol, she couldn't hear his answering shout. In fact, the wilderness seemed preternaturally still. All was breathless, heavy with suspense—and she stood, just as Dan had thought, between the ruin of her fire and the sled, and she looked with straight eyes to the oncoming wolves.

"Hurry, Snowbird," Lennox was whispering. "Give me the pistol—for that last work. We have only a moment more."

He looked very calm and brave, half-raised as he was on the sled, and perhaps

a half-smile lingered at his bearded lips. And the bravest thing of all was that to spare her, he was willing to take the little weapon from her hand to use it in its last service. She tried to smile at him; then crept over to his side.

The strain was over. They knew what they had to face. She put the pistol in his steady hand.

His hand lowered to his side, and he sat waiting. The moments passed. The wolves seemed to be waiting too, for the last flickering tongue of the little fire to die away. The last of her fuel was ignited and burning out; they were crouched and ready to spring if she should venture forth after more. The darkness closed down deeper—and at last only a column of smoke remained.

It was nothing to be afraid of. The great, gray leader of the pack, a wolf that weighed nearly one hundred pounds, began slowly and deliberately to set his muscles for the spring. It was the same as when the great bull-elk comes to bay at the base of the cliffs—usually some one wolf, often the great pack-leader wishing to remind his followers of his might, or else some full-grown male proud in his strength, will attack alone. Because this was the noblest game that the pack had ever faced, the leader chose to make the first leap himself. It was true that these two had neither such horns nor razor-edged hoofs as the elk, yet they had eyes that chilled his heart when he tried to look at them. But one was lying almost prone, and the fire was out. . . . Besides, the madness of starvation, intensified ten times by their terrible realization of the wound at her hip, was upon the pack as never before. The muscles bunched at his lean flanks.

BUT as Snowbird and her father gazed at him in fascinated horror, the great wolf suddenly smashed down in the snow. She was aware of its curious, utter collapse actually before the sound of the rifle-shot that occasioned it had penetrated her consciousness. It was a perfect shot at long range; and for a long instant her tortured faculties refused to accept the truth.

Then the rifle spoke again, and a second wolf—a large male that crouched on the other side of the sled, fell kicking in the snow. The pack had leaped forward at the first death; but they halted at the second. And then terror came to them when the third wolf suddenly opened its

savage lips and screamed in the death agony.

Up to this time, except for the report of the rifle, the attack had been made in utter silence. The reason was just that both breath and nervous force are needed to shout; and Dan Failing could afford to waste neither of these vital forces. He had dropped to his knee, and was firing again and again—his gray eyes looking clear and straight along the barrel, his fingers without jerk or tremor pressing again and again at the trigger, his hands holding the rifle as in a vise. All his nerves and muscles were completely in his command. The distance was far, yet he shot with deadly, amazing accuracy. The wolves were within a few feet of the girl; a fraction's waver in the gun-barrel might have sped his bullets toward her.

"It's Dan Failing," Lennox shouted as the fourth wolf died.

Frenzied in their savagery, three or four of the remaining wolves leaped at the body of one of the wounded; but the others scattered in all directions. Still Dan fired with the same unbelievable accuracy, and still the wolves died in the snow. The girl and the man were screaming now in the frenzied joy of deliverance. The wolves scurried frantically among the trees; and some of them unknowingly ran full in the face of their enemy, to be shot down without mercy. And few indeed were those that escaped—to collect on a distant ridge, and perhaps, to be haunted in dreams by a Death that came out of the shadows to blast the pack.

"WE will take it easy from now on,"

Dan Failing told them after the camp was cleared of its dead and the fire was built high. "We have plenty of food; and we will travel a little while each day, and make warm camps at night. We'll have friendship-fires, just as sometimes we used to build on the ridge."

"But after you get down into the valleys?" Lennox asked anxiously. "Are you and Snowbird coming up here to live?"

The silence fell over their camp; and a wounded wolf whined in the darkness. "Do you think I could leave it now?" Dan asked. By no gift of words could he have explained why; yet he knew that by token of his conquest, his spirit was wedded to

the dark forests forever. "But Heaven knows what I'll do for a living."

Snowbird crept near him, and her eyes shone in the bright firelight. "I've solved that," she said. "You know you studied forestry—and I told the supervisor at the station how much you knew about it. I wasn't going to tell you until—until certain things happened—and now they have happened, I can't wait another instant. He said that with a little more study you could get into the Forest Service—take an examination and become a ranger. You're a natural forester if one ever lived, and you'd love the work."

"Besides," Lennox added, "it would clip my Snowbird's wings to make her live on the plains. My big house will be rebuilt, children. There will be fires in the fireplace on the fall nights. There is no use in thinking of the plains."

"And there's going to be a smaller house—just a cottage at first—right beside it," Dan replied. He could go back to his forests after all. He wouldn't have to throw away his birthright, fought for so hard; and it seemed to him no other occupation could offer as much as that of the forest-rangers—those silent, cool-nerved guardians of the forest.

For a long time Snowbird and he stood together at the edge of the firelight, their bodies warm from the glow, their hearts brimming with words they could not utter. Words always come hard to the mountain people. They are folk of action—and Dan, rather than to words, trusted to the yearning of his arms.

"We're made for each other, Snowbird darling," he told her breathlessly at last. "And at last I can claim what I've been waiting for, all these months."

He claimed it; and in open defiance to all civil law, he collected fully one hundred times in the next few minutes. But it didn't particularly matter, and Snowbird didn't even turn her face. "Maybe you've forgotten you claimed it when you first came back, too," she said.

So he had. It had completely slipped his mind, in the excitement of his fight with the wolf-pack. And then while Lennox pretended to be asleep, they sat breathless with happiness on the edge of the sled, and watched the dawn come out.

They had never seen the snow so lovely in the sunlight.

The Profiteer Plunderers

Burglar-Proof Flats



THOSE amiable rascallions who call themselves "The Profiteer Plunderers" here undertake another adventure in benevolent rascality. You will find the tale amusing indeed.

BOYD MUIR came back from a musical festival in the Midlands at which one of his compositions had been played, and to his surprise he found the Kensington house in which he and that charming and daring pair, Cyprian and Thecla Xystus, lived, entirely empty.

This was not unusual, for the pair were almost always out following the round of the gay life they enjoyed so much, and, incidentally, picking up pointers which enabled them to carry out the daring burglaries which paid for that gay life, and Boyd Muir's music as well. But the astonishing thing about the pretty Kensington house this time was that it was utterly empty. Boyd Muir let himself in with his latchkey, expecting the efficient Chinese servant to hear him and relieve him of his valise in the hall. But no Sun Yat appeared.

Boyd wandered through the rooms, encountering no one and feeling, for the moment, a thrill of fear—that, in his absence, something had happened to the darling and attractive brother and sister, and they were perhaps even now under lock and key awaiting trial for a housebreaking that had been discovered. But even that would

not explain the absence of the Chinese servant, if he were absent. Boyd went to the electric bell—and did not push it.

Across the ivory button was a little card, and written on the card was the one word, "DON'T."

HE picked the card off the bell, smiling and reassured, for he knew the writing was Cyprian's, and turning over the card, he saw written in the same neat and beautiful fist.

No good ringing. Just amuse yourself with the piano, and be patient, my child.

Boyd grinned again. There was something in the air, that was obvious. Some fresh profiteer was to be plundered, and the pair and Sun Yat, too, were even then busy on the plans. He went to the piano, smiling, and was soon lost in the gorgeous music of "Madame Butterfly," and in the middle of his playing he had a shock.

He looked up suddenly, and close to his elbow was a big man, a man utterly strange to him. He was a tall, powerful-seeming fellow with thick hair and a neat beard, and his eyes covered by large, blue spectacles, of the kind that have wings

to keep out the light at the side. He wore the black suit of a servant, yet somehow his figure had a menacing stoop.

Boyd sprang up at once, fearing the worst, which was the police, and his hand went to his hip-pocket.

"How did you get in here, and what the deuce do you mean by coming in, anyhow?" he snapped. And the strange man answered:

"Allee lightee, Mister Boyd. A letter f lom Mister Cyplian. You havee tlea?" There was a smile on the strange face; then a hand went up and beard and glasses were stripped off, and it was Sun Yat himself who stood smiling at Boyd.

Sun Yat brought the perfect Orange Pekoe tea in the little handleless cups, and Boyd read Cyprian's note. It was characteristic:

My Infant:

When Sun Yat has tempered your beauty with a little grease paint, and you have your evening clothes on, come to dinner at 7a Admiralty Chambers. Dinner at 6:30, an absurd hour, but the food will be rather absurd, too.

C. X.

P. S. Ask for Mr. Maron.

What on earth was Cyprian doing in Admiralty Chambers, wondered Boyd. He was after a haul, and obviously a rich haul, for the Chambers were notorious for the wealthy people who lived in them, and were called, indeed, the Millionaires' Rabbit Warren. But if they were notorious for that they were also notorious for their safety. They swarmed with day and night porters; every device for protecting the denizens of the sumptuous block from fire and burglary and other dangers was in use. The landlords even boasted that burglars were shy of the Chambers and dare not even attempt a theft. Yet Cyprian, and no doubt Thecla, also, were already established in the very building itself, obviously intent on plunder; Boyd was amazed at their effrontery.

An hour later Boyd Muir with a heavily sallow skin, a fierce and tremendous mustache, bristling eyebrows, stiff hair and an artificial portliness under his waistcoat (all supplied by Sun Yat) so that his whole aspect was changed to that of a foreigner from Portugal, took the Tube to the Museum, and then, hailing a taxi, drove back over some of the way he had come to Admiralty Chambers, in a street near Park Lane. He had long ago learned the neces-

sity of doubling on his tracks to hide his movements.

THE sumptuous marble vestibule of the Chambers was blazing with lights and thronged with menservants in uniform, and neat maidservants flitting about on their duties; for part of the wonder of the Chambers was the marvelous service arrangements. The millionaire simply took a furnished flat in the block, the landlords looked after cleaning, meals and everything else. As he passed these servants, and was wafted aloft in the great lift, Boyd Muir wondered that Cyprian and Thecla, daring as they were, should have risked their freedom in order to rob someone in such a stronghold as this.

On the fourth floor, there was a watchman—as there was on every floor—who directed Boyd to one of the doors on the landing, and rang the bell over which was pinned a printed card bearing the name, "Caleb Maron."

The Chinaman, who had left Kensington half an hour before Boyd, and was still disguised, opened the door. The musician passed through a beautiful hall, and found himself in an exquisite chamber. There a long, cadaverous, very dark-skinned man rose from a chair to greet him.

"I am charmed to meet you Mr. Weetwood," he began, and then as Boyd stared, the cadaverous face broke into a grin. "Come now, sonny, don't you know your old Uncle Caleb of Canville, U. S. A., or are you giving me the frozen mitt?"

"You wretch!" said Boyd. "How could anybody recognize you as anything but the living skeleton? Your mother would positively hate to know you—what's it all about, Cyprian? What are we going to do in this den of burglar-alarms and man-traps?"

"We are going to have dinner at the ridiculous hour of 6:30," Cyprian said, and he led the way through swinging-doors into a charming dining-room. "No, don't ask questions. I'm not going to answer them yet."

They sat down at the polished-oak table, and Boyd realized the perfection of the Admiralty Chambers service. Everything was exquisite; the silver and linen perfection itself. A deft young maid waited on them, and she was in keeping with the rest of the opulent appointments of the place. So unobtrusive were her movements, that Boyd scarcely noticed her; she

was merely a quiet and efficient thing of black dress and starched apron, although he did have an impression of rather ruddy apple-cheeks, and fair hair piled up in mountainous manner. She was nothing but a parlor-maid, until she said politely in his ear:

"You'll have claret rather than hock, wont you, old thing? The hock is like the *entrée*, not at all the stuff that a song-maker should have."

Boyd glanced round swiftly; for the moment he was amazed by the red cheeks and fair hair, that should have been pale and beautiful cheeks and black, bobbed hair. Then he exclaimed:

"Heavens above, Thecla!"

"IN the flat underneath," said Cyprian, "is the most bloated thing in cloth-manufacturers. He made thousands by the hundred in the early days of the war by selling shoddy khaki at twice the price of ordinary, good cloth. He is a rogue really; perhaps one day he will be jailed for it. And since that period he has been steadily adding to his fortune, mainly by fraudulent means and at the expense of soldiers and hard-working citizens. Thecla—but she calls herself Muriel for business purposes—is due to wait on him in about fifty minutes. He dines at eight o'clock. Hence our meal at the idiotic hour of 6:30."

"No," insisted Boyd, "I don't understand that 'hence.' Why should it be necessary for us to dine now, even if he does dine at eight? And why is it that—that Muriel should go to him?"

"You're not very bright tonight, my child," said Cyprian. "You should have seen at once that it is only by fixing our dinner at this time that Thecla, or Muriel, can wait on the Monilaws, the people beneath us, and also on me. It is necessary that we should have a spy in the land. You know the risk-proof reputation of these Chambers: you can understand that the difficulties of spying out the land are immense. The only way to do it, is the way Thecla is doing it, by acting as a maid; she got the job here for the purpose. In the same way, so alert are the people managing this place, it was difficult for her to communicate with me without suspicion. It is only by the meal arrangement we can do it. The managers like to save money on servants. Since my dinner is early, they can also use my maid for the Monilaws, who dine later."

"Oh, she spies out their riches?"

"Well, yes and no," chimed in Thecla. "We, of course, knew these profiteers reeked of money, and one always knows more or less where to find it on the premises. In this case it is simple, for when it is not hanging round Mrs. Monilaw's neck, it is in the safe under her dressing-table."

"Jewels?" asked Boyd.

"Forty thousand pounds' worth of jewels," answered Thecla. "Jewels in ropes and pendants, and clasps and tiaras. They've simply run amuck in jewels. They've bought diamonds and rubies and emeralds and pearls and opals as ordinary people buy potatoes. Still, my being their maid isn't really to find out about the jewels, but to make it easy to get them."

"And that's not easy, according to the tradition of these Chambers."

"Oh, it's easy, if one is just clever about it, as we undoubtedly are," said Cyprian, smiling. "To break into the flat in the ordinary way is quite impossible, naturally. The doors of every flat are under the eyes of a watchman, as you observed, and the windows, which open onto a fire-escape, are also under the eyes of patrolmen who go constant rounds from their watch-room in the court upon which the flats look. No, you can't get in, or out, in the ordinary way. But then, you see, my infant, we don't want to."

"Is Thecla, as Muriel the maid, going to do the stealing then?" asked Boyd.

"They have a man, just as we have Sun Yat, always on the place. And he has an eagle eye. It would be quite impossible for Thecla to do the thing, and even if she did she would find it difficult to hide masses of jewelry about her. They are very strict. The servants are always under supervision. No, you or I, my child are going to do the stealing."

"Well, go ahead, and explain how it will be."

"Finished your dinner? Good; come along, while Muriel clears away."

CYPRIAN led the way to another beautiful room, a boudoir. "You may wonder how I managed to get this flat, especially a flat over these human diamond-fields, the Monilaws," he said. "But it wasn't a bit difficult. The prices here are so stiff that not many can afford 'em. I had the choice of three flats, by simply offering to take one on a long lease and paying in advance for a quarter. I just

chose the flat over the richest profiteer available. My being a newcomer, an extra, made it necessary for the managers to get a new servant; that let in Thecla, and the rest was easily fixed up." Cyprian paused in the center of the thick carpet in the middle of the boudoir. "We start our robbery from here."

"Oh, do we!" scoffed Boyd. "I suppose we just sink through the floor, and there we are?"

"Of course," said Cyprian, and he smiled at the other's perplexity. Then he switched the heavy carpet aside. In the center of the parquet flooring was a neat square cavity, from which all the wood blocks had been removed. Boyd gaped at it.

"Sun Yat's work," said Cyprian, softly. "You know what an absolute genius he is with his hands; he has the skill of a jeweler: During the week you have been away, he has worked with marvelous patience, removing the bricks and cutting the concrete—solid concrete, mind you—away fragment by fragment. It is all gone now—that's why you must walk softly and talk in whispers. Just underneath, you can see the thin skin of the ceiling—it is a painted wooden ceiling. Only that stands between us and those diamonds. And even that wooden ceiling has been cut through by Sun Yat."

"And the Monilaws and their permanent manservant?" asked Boyd.

Cyprian put the carpet back carefully and grinned. He led the way to the corner of the room. There was a strange cylinder there, with a rubber tube snaking away from it, and sinking into the floor.

"The pipes carrying the electric wires come up through a hole in the floor there; we have enlarged the hole a little, so that a pipe carrying gas can discharge into the room underneath." He caught Boyd's look. "The war, very usefully, turned our minds to the benefits of gas; this is sleeping-gas, invisible, odorless. It will go softly through that pipe, and the diamond-fiends below will sleep harmlessly while we do our necessary work. A similar pipe runs into the butler's pantry. When the man is in there—well, he, too, will have a long, peaceful doze."

"Ah, I see the uses of Thecla," said Boyd. "She will signal when the time is ripe for gassing the diamondeers. What is the signal?"

"Oh, I just go out and shake a duster on the fire-escape," said Thecla. "But

I've done other thrilling things as well. While Sun Yat did all this hole-boring, Cyprian watched out of the window. Directly there was any danger of anyone overhearing, I signaled, and at Cyprian's command Sun Yat stopped until I signaled again, 'All clear.' There were moments when my heart was in my mouth."

"So I should imagine," said Boyd. "But, if you are only there as maid for meals, how shall we know about tonight?"

"Tonight, my child!" laughed Cyprian. "Rid your mind of the thief-in-the-night idea. This is going to be gentle exercise after dinner. Hence the gas-pipe into the boudoir and pantry and not into bedrooms. Employers and employees retire to those rooms after meals for a brief rest after the labors of eating; then we act. And Thecla, you had better go down and open the drama; it's twenty to eight, time to set the table for the diamond-bugs."

THE burglary was dramatically easy. Thecla shook a duster on the fire-escape outside the Monilaws' window, and Cyprian commanded, "Switch on gas." Sun Yat at one cylinder, and Boyd at the other, turned the cocks, and the potent gas began to escape noiselessly into the room in which Mr. and Mrs. Monilaw sat, and into the pantry where the manservant lurked. Thecla's signal had signified they were there. Then, in a surprisingly short time, the signal duster fluttered again. The gas had done its work. Sun Yat drew up the wooden ceiling by the attachments he had made to it, a rope ladder was lowered, and Cyprian and Boyd with gas-masks on descended into the room beneath. The ladder was then drawn up by the Chinaman, and the painted wooden ceiling closed again. Looking up, they could see how delicate Sun Yat's cutting had been; in that high room there was no sign of his handiwork on the ceiling. But they did not wait to marvel at his cleverness. Nor did they stop to drink in the spectacle of a fat and shifty-looking profiteer and his wife, nodding solemnly in armchairs under the deep sleep of the gas—nor that of a lean butler asleep in the pantry, sprawled over his table.

They acted swiftly. Cyprian slipped a bunch of keys out of the shady-looking profiteer's pocket with great delicacy, and the masked Thecla, who had come into the room, led the two young men into the bedchamber where the jewel-safe was.

In fifteen minutes all the jewel-cases (with the jewels in them) had been transferred to the pockets of the young men, the safe had been relocked and the bunch of keys replaced.

Thecla was just about to go out and give the duster-signal, when the doorbell rang!

It rang vehemently and commandingly, and there was a loud knocking. The three stood petrified for a moment. It flashed through the minds of all that it was dangerous to try to escape now. The watchman on the landing knew very well that not only was the whole of the Monilaw household at home, but Thecla was there too, and if she, at least, did not open the door he would suspect something. If the young men escaped and left Thecla to face the caller, it was more than likely that the Monilaws would be discovered asleep, and from the heaviness of their sleep (for the effects of the gas lasted hours) it would be recognized that something was wrong; and that meant that Thecla would have a feeble chance of escaping. They stood thinking, swiftly, and then the quick brain of Cyprian began to work.

He pushed them all out into the passage, and then closed the door of the gas-filled room. Then, with a gesture he ordered "Off gas-masks!" Then he swept Boyd along to a room which was obviously the profiteer's study, and as they entered that room, he snatched Thecla's mask, and whispered fiercely to her.

"Open the door, and turn 'em away, old girl. If you can't—bring 'em in here."

Thecla opened the door. They heard her speak, and a man answer, heard her speak again, and then to their horror they heard the man's voice say sharply:

"You've got to let us in, miss. You can't help yourself. We're police-officers."

Thecla's voice said, "Wait here, please," and she sped into the study.

"Police!" she gasped. "They will come in—" And even as she spoke two men entered the study while one remained in the passage. They were in plain clothes, obviously special-service detectives. They stared at the two young men grimly, and Cyprian and Boyd stared back with what courage they could muster. Then the taller and stronger of the twain said:

"Enoch Monilaw, it is my duty to arrest you. The charge is one of defrauding His Majesty's Government in the matter of army-clothing contracts. I advise you to come quickly—"

Before that amazing statement Boyd was absolutely dumb. Cyprian was not.

"I'm afraid I will not come quietly—"

"I 'ave two men 'ere," threatened the officer, "I 'ave power to call more."

"Or even any way," Cyprian finished sweetly. "I shall not come at all. You see, I am not Enoch Monilaw. I am only his secretary; this is my clerk."

THE dazed detective was about to say something, but the second officer muttered in his ear: "That's right, Stephen. Enoch Monilaw is a fat, bald man of fifty-seven, 'cordin' to description. This can't be 'im." The first detective changed his remark (whatever it was going to be) to, "Where is Enoch Monilaw? Lead me to 'im."

Cyprian the alert and daring was all smiles at once. Boyd marveled at his coolness and nerve.

"Certainly," he said to the officers. "Mr. Monilaw is with his wife in the sitting-room, probably dozing."

He led them along the passage. Boyd's heart went racing wildly at the danger of the thing. What would that reckless young devil do? Near the door of the room of sleep, the disguised Cyprian stopped, and faced the detective.

"Might I suggest, officer," he said confidentially, "that it would be well to be on your guard against Mr. Monilaw? He is a very powerful man—very reckless. And I happen to know he is armed. He might give trouble—"

"Thanks," said the detective, and he beckoned to the man standing in the passage. "Albert, you'd better come along, too. Stand ready outside the door." Then the door was opened by Cyprian, who immediately stood back from it; and the first two detectives entered.

The first detective walked boldly across the room, followed by the second. He put out his hand to the sleeping profiteer's shoulder, and he began:

"Enoch Monilaw, it is my duty to arrest you—" His voice weakened. "It is—me—me—duty to—arrest—me—du—" He tried to rouse himself from the grip of the gas; he half turned to call his companion to his aid, swayed, tried to recover, muttered feebly, "H-h-help," and then fell onto the neck of the sleeping profiteer—and remained so clasped to him, sleeping. The second detective, who was already rocking on his feet, made a step forward, perhaps

to go to his pal's aid, but he didn't. He merely toppled down very ungracefully, and lay sleeping soundly at the feet of the other.

The third officer had been entirely taken aback by these strange happenings. He had gaped at the antics of the two inside the gas-filled room; then, as the first detective had fallen, he had jumped forward, inside the room. But when he saw that officer fall, he recognized that there was something wrong, and he turned to jump back, and out of the fateful chamber. Cyprian on the alert was too much for him. With a pleasant smile, and a chuckling, "If you don't mind," his strong hand had caught the man on the chest, and the third and last police officer was shoved back into the room.

Then Cyprian closed the door and turned the key in the lock. There were two blows on the door from the fist of the trapped officer. Then there was silence. For five minutes Cyprian leaned against the door, sniffing at a flask, for he had caught some of the vapors of the gas as he stood by the door, and had to inhale the antidote. Then he reached for his mask, saying to Thecla, "Wave the flowing duster, old thing, it's time we moved."

IT was a matter of a few minutes only for them to climb from the roomful of slumbering profiteers and policemen, by means of the ladder that Sun Yat let down; to replace the piece of painted board in the ceiling, and then the carpet. The gas cylinders were packed in valises, and then the two young men, with the disguised Sun Yat in attendance and carrying the lug-

gage, went down by the lift. In the vestibule Cyprian, or rather "Caleb Maron," explained that he and his servant were going into the country with his friend for a few days, and his flat need not be disturbed until he came back, and he left an entirely fictitious address to which letters must be forwarded. Then they all took a taxi, and by means of various changes and doublings, reached the Kensington house. An hour later, Thecla joined them.

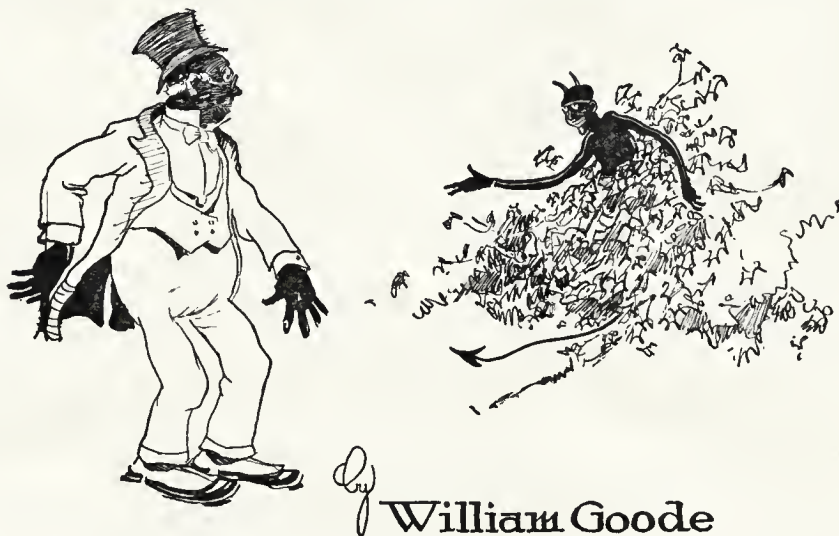
With the diamonds spread before them, they laughed over the strange twist their adventure had taken.

"They're still asleep there, profiteers and policemen," said Cyprian. "I don't suppose the effect of gas will work off for hours, for we gave them a strong dose. And then when they do wake up—what will Monilaw say when he finds himself absolutely clasped in the arms of the law, and what will the law say, clasped in the arms of Monilaw? What a situation! What an extraordinary chance that we should take part in it, and what wouldn't I give to be there when the final scene takes place! What will they make of it?"

What they made of it, or tried to make of it, can be recalled by those who remember the case of Rex vs. Monilaw. The wild charge of the criminal profiteer that the police had stolen his jewels to the extent of forty thousand pounds, and the counter accusation of the police that Monilaw had secretary and clerk whose names he refused to reveal, did much to enliven the proceedings of that otherwise sordid trial. But in spite of all accusations and efforts, the secretary and clerk were never traced—neither were the jewels.

A **N**OTHER exciting adventure of "The Profiteer Plunderers" will be described in the next, the May, issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.

When Satan Came to Gilead



William Goode

ON a certain fine Sunday in early May the sun rose in the east as usual, described its accustomed arc over Gilead, and settled in the west, disclosing nothing but peace and quiet and orderliness in that little negro community. The Reverend Skidder's sermon was if possible more forceful, eloquent and lurid than ever. Some of the backsliders were given special attention, and a few hardened sinners were brought to open repentance, for the good Reverend was a strong believer in vigorous personal treatment. His Scriptural vocabulary was almost without limit, for he had the faculty of coining invectives which were all the more impressive for not being always understood by his hearers or even himself. His personal knowledge of the Devil, and his apparent familiarity with all the appurtenances of hell he was always careful to make apparent. The Reverend Skidder had no hope of winning converts by gentle suasion. He knew his congregation.

So on this particular May day he glared triumphantly at his flock over his steel-bowed spectacles and felt that his sway was absolute. He believed that he held their souls, to speak figuratively, in the hollow of his hand. He was their spiritual sponsor, their intermediary in divine grace, and it gratified his vanity as well as his thirst

A JOYOUS chronicle of the surprising events which led to the spectacular appearance of the Devil himself in the dark village of Gilead.

for power, which was only human, after all.

But a couple of months later the same sun again described its arc over Gilead to blink and stagger at a most unbelievable change. A more complete reversal of form could not be imagined. The staid little settlement had acquired a verve and a dash worthy of a gay and wicked metropolis.

A couple of dance-halls were in full blast through the night and even into the early morning hours. A new saloon, the Black and Tan, had opened opposite the established and conservative Black 'Possum. Men, boys and even females played craps openly in the street, and higher games of loo and poker in the homes. There was a decided appearance of festivity, a sense of freedom of morals, a general atmosphere of depravity suggestive of a modern Gomorrah. Nobody thought of industry, and scarce more than a corporal's guard attended church. Nine tenths of the pews were empty, and the contribution-box no longer returned to the altar well filled. Well might the Reverend Skidder bellow and thunder and send forth unheeded warnings of the wrath to come. He had apprehensions of a personal kind also. His quaking vision saw his meager salary dwindling to the zero-mark. Not until then did it occur to him and the few left of his

faithful adherents to seek to discover why this thing had happened.

It was Elder Beanpole who solved the riddle. Satan had come to town and had shut his great black wings down over Gilead. He was stalking the streets seeking whom he might devour, and scattering the flames of perdition right and left. The aroma of his sulphurous presence was in the very air. One needed only to take a good, deep sniff to perceive it plainly.

NOW, Elder Beanpole, while at present a stanch pillar of the Gilead church, had served an apprenticeship in his early career on the levees of New Orleans, where, by the dictates of fate and circumstance, he had pursued a godless though perhaps not an unprofitable career. Thereby he had gained much worldly knowledge, and this now stood him in good stead in the probing of the mystery. It had not been such a difficult matter. Step by step he had progressed easily until convinced beyond all doubt that the advent of Satan in Gilead was indisputably coincidental with the coming to town of Mr. Hi Betts, owner and founder of the Black and Tan saloon, the new rival of the Black 'Possum.

Mr. Betts had drifted into Gilead, according to his avowed proclamation, accidentally. Whence he came no one knew or inquired, and up to the present no one had cared. To become a popular member of Gilead society it was not necessary to prove a pedigree. A fair display of money or cheap jewelry, or the flash of a lively temperament, was sufficient. Mr. Betts, never blind to opportunity, decided that Gilead offered certain advantages, and he lost no time in grasping them. His fortunes hung in the balance for a time, though, for the rival saloon, the Black 'Possum, had the advantage of prestige, and the negro temperament is addicted to established usage. Moreover the temperance league was growing stronger, and the Reverend Skidder had so thoroughly inculcated the fear of the devil in the souls of the fearsome that things began to look disastrous for the saloon-keeper. Then came the change, so sweeping and so radical as to be almost unbelievable. In an incomprehensibly brief space of time Gilead was in the throes of moral and social disruption. Elder Beanpole hastened to the Reverend Skidder with his discovery.

"Ah hab done follered dat coon to his tree, Pahson," chuckled the Elder. "He

sholy am de fly dat's spilin' the stew. Ain' no heap ob doubt ob it. Dat Hi Betts am jes' as slick as a banana-peel undah yo' heel."

The Reverend frowned austere.

"Ah don' reckermember habin' seen his pussonality in mah congregation," he observed thoughtfully.

"Reckon he ain' no shucks on chu'ch-goin'."

"Hum!" rumbled the divine. "'Pears laik it's gwine to be necerary to draw the fangs of dis rabenous wolf dat am stealing de lambs from mah flock."

"Amen! Glory be, Pahson!" said Elder Beanpole devoutly.

The Reverend Skidder stroked his scanty chin-whisker meditatively until lightning suddenly flashed in his eyes.

"Dey ain' goin' to be no mo' fear ob de Lor' in Gilead twell de ol' Debbil be cast out. We jest got to whet our razzers an' cut off his haid. We got to chase him wif a red-hot iron and scotch his tail, and dribe him back yowlin' an' squawkin' into de fires ob de bottomless pit."

"Amen, brudder!"

AFTER this scathing declaration the Reverend lapsed again for a moment into deep reflection from which he finally emerged to ask sharply:

"How come, brudder?"

"How come, brudder?" The Reverend bent a searching and soulful gaze upon his confrère. "How 'bout it? Wha' dat reason, son?" He waited suspensefully.

"Bekase dem fool niggers been tol' fo' a fac' dat dere ain' no Debbil no mo', an' dey ain' got nuffin' mo' to fear, fo' de ol' Debbil am plumb daid. So, as long as de Debbil am plumb daid an' in his grave, dere ain' no call to fear punishment no mo', so dey kin stay from chu'ch an' do anyfing dey laiks to do, an' nebber git punished fo' it."

It required some moments for the preacher thoroughly to assimilate this startling revelation. There was a somber glare in his eyes. Twice he opened his mouth soundlessly but finally was able to articulate audibly:

"Who tol' dem niggers dat?"

"Hi Betts."

"Am yo' tellin' me dat Hi Betts make dem nigger fools beliebe dat de Debbil am daid?"

"He sholy do."

"An' dey make out to beliebe him?"

"Da's jes' wha' dey do."

"How come he mek dem beliebe de Debbil am daid? How he gwine to sassify dem? Am he de proof?"

"Sholy!" averred the Elder solemnly. "Dis yeah Hi Betts, he hab a printed newspaper dat say dat Satan done been caught and hanged up in Georgy, an' dey ain' no mo' fear ob de Debbil on dis yearth. He jes' hang up dat newspaper in his saloon, an' all de niggers dat kin read, dey read it to dem dat kaint' an' den dey jes' cut loose on de road to hell-fire."

The effect of this upon the Reverend was appalling. His eyes dilated until little could be seen but fearfully contracted pupils in the great balls of white. His purple lips quivered, and his flat nostrils swelled enormously. He was a decidedly dangerous-looking object. Rage convulsed his bosom.

"Wha'—wha' 'bout dat newspaper?" he demanded stridently. "Yo' done see and read dat fing yo'se'f?"

"Ah sholy did, Pahson."

"Hum—hum—dat's berry strange fing. How de ol' Debbil gwine to be daid when he am right yeah in dis town breathin' de fires ob hell into de faces ob mah best belubbed parish'ners? How dey gwine beliebe sech a fool story as dat? Jes' laik a nigger to take de wo'd ob a sinner laik Hi Betts! Don' dey know nuffin'? Yo' don' reckon Satan gwine let hissself be cotched an' hanged laik dat, does yo'? Ain' no niggers up in Georgy smart enough to so much as lay a hand on his tail—say nuffin' ob holdin' onto him. Elder, yo' ain' gwine to ax a 'telligent gemmen laik me to beliebe dat, am yo'?"

Very solemnly Elder Beanpole drew from his pocket a much tattered and besmeared newspaper and extended it to the Parson.

"Ah ain' doin' nuffin' but suspendin' mah judgment, Pahson," he said with a non-committal air. "Ah skittered roun' an' got one ob dem newspapers mahse'f, an' I brung it to yo', so yo' could read fo' yo'se'f."

FOR a moment the Parson hesitated, and gazed suspiciously at the paper as if entertaining a fear that the touch might mean defilement. Then he overcame his scruples and gingerly held it up while he adjust his spectacles. There it was, sure enough, emblazoned in large type on the front page of the *Colored Freeman's Gazette*, a journal of unquestioned repute.

RUN TO EARTH AT LAST!

OLD SATAN CAUGHT BACK OF JIM HUNKER'S CORN DISTILLERY NEAR WAYCROSS.

Dragged into the Light of Day and Fully Identified by Aunt Mammy Epps, Our Well Known Conjure Woman, He Was Sentenced to Death, and Hanged by Moonlight Until He Was Dead. His Tail and Horns Are on Exhibition in the Vestry of the Union Methodist Church, Where All Good Christian People Can See Them and Be Satisfied That Sin and Suffering and Sorrow and Wickedness Will Be Known No More on Earth. Details of the Weird Affair May Be Read Below.

So far the good parson progressed and then stopped excitedly to wipe his spectacles. Several huge beads of perspiration glided obliquely from the bridge of his nose across his ebony cheek. He flirted his bandana a moment and indulged in a raucous sneeze. Then, holding the paper off more gingerly than ever, he read on:

Last Friday night the festive young people of our enterprising little town planned a very interesting program of amusement. They were assisted somewhat by a few of the older residents, including Mr. Henberry Diggs and Mammy Epps. It being the full of the moon, and the third day of the third month of the third year of the new century, it was remembered that this was the date given by the prophet Jeremiah when Beelzebub would make one of his regular visits to the earth. So these young people whose souls were free of sin, none being married, set forth to capture him and free the world of his evil presence. Our reporter has learned that the enterprise was a great success, for armed with conjure-words given them by Mammy Epps, they ran old Satan down behind Brother Jim Hunker's Corn Distillery, and he being helpless before their sinless souls, they dragged him as far as the Union Methodist Church, where under a big china-berry tree they hanged him in effigy.

The Parson paused peremptorily at this point and closely studied the print a moment.

"Wha' dat, brudder?" he asked. "Wha' dat wo'd *effigy*?"

The Elder shuffled his feet a little, looked up at the sky a moment thoughtfully, and then with an air of wisdom answered:

"Oh, dat wo'd? 'Pears laik Ah heard it said it was tar. Dey done smeared him wif tar."

The Parson, apparently satisfied, returned the paper to its owner gloomily. It was plain that he was the victim of many emotions. Somehow he resented the action of those sinless young people of the little Georgia town. His philosophy was cast to earth by the event. He foresaw dire re-

sults. They began to grow to enormous proportions. Without Satan, how could religion continue to hold its hard-earned grip on the universe? He reflected somewhat sadly upon the fact that he had ministered unto the people of this parish faithfully for thirty years. He had converted and baptized their sinners, christened their newly born, wedded their love-lorn and buried their dead; he had prayed with them and expounded theology to them from every angle, and always Satan had furnished him the necessary material. Now that he had no longer this great weapon with which to fight the cause of the Lord, he could see no way of continuing the fight.

For several days the good preacher suffered great agony of spirit. On every hand he saw increasing evidences of sad dissolution. He walked down into the little settlement, endeavoring to argue, or at least reason with his straying lambs. While none were exactly disrespectful, only a few heeded him in the least. Many avoided him; some listened absently, and others gibed at him. All the while the reign of lawlessness and vice was becoming a genuine orgy in Gilead. The good preacher almost sweat drops of blood. He foresaw the Angel Gabriel descending upon Gilead with a flaming sword. He had terrible forebodings.

He knew of two people, though, who had not yielded to the demoralizing influences of the hour. They were big Mose Goober and his consort Randy. The great, hulking, lazy, good-natured negro and his giantess of a wife were sanely keeping aloof. This was probably due to Randy, who was an intensely practical and astute colored lady.

It now occurred to the distracted preacher that he might gather consolation, sympathy and possibly advice from these worthy people. In fact, he knew of no others likely to give him heed, and so he decided to call. He was received formally and icily at first by Randy, but after a touching portrayal of his trials, the big negress, who was possessed of a kind heart, unbent somewhat. Her sloe-black eyes flashed fire, and she folded her powerful arms across her ample bosom and gazed intensely and scornfully at the preacher.

"Dem yeah nigger-folks meks me berry sick," she avowed contemptuously. "Dey jes' a passel of nachal-bo'n fools. Dey jes' oughter hab a good beatin', an' it am lucky fo' dem Ah ain' deir spiritual adviser."

The Reverend Skidder was willing to admit inwardly that this was true enough, for he as well as many others had deep respect for Randy's physical prowess.

"De Lor' say dat we mus' rule wif love an' gentle wo'ds," protested the preacher. "Ah is boun' to be guided by the teachin's ob de Scriptures."

"Ain' yo' de spiritual adviser ob dem no-'count niggers?" asked Randy with fierce inflection.

"Ah sholy hab been," admitted the Parson.

"Didn' de good Lor' Jesus chase de money-changers out ob de temple wif a rod? Didn' he lambaste dem sinners wif all his might?"

"'Pears laik he did, sister."

"Den yo' got de right to do de same. An ain' advisin' ob yo', Pahson, fo' Ah hab done took mahsef out ob yo' chu'ch, an' Ah ain' claimin' de right no more, bein' as Ah' am leanin' towards de Meferdist. But Ah ain' cha'ging yo' nuffin, fo' de hint. It am mah 'pinion dat yo' mought mek dem see de error ob deir ways if yo' went down dere wif a club and struck a few blows fo' de Lor'."

THE Reverend Skidder fanned himself gently with his hat-brim.

"Ah ain' dispute but yo' may be right, sister; but yo' ain' gwine to catch no flies wif vinegar."

"Huh! Kain' yo' argify dem?"

"Dey ain' gwine listen to mah argifyin'."

"Wha' argifyin' am yo' usin'?"

The preacher elaborated eloquently, and Randy listened attentively.

"Ah done fought so," she commented when he had finished. "Yo' ain' splanify to dem any troofs dat dey kain' get around."

"Ah ain' jes' got yo' idee, sister."

Randy squared her shoulders and pointed one finger straight at the preacher.

"Ain' yo' neber read the fus' Book ob de Scriptures?"

"Ah suttlingly hab, sister," spluttered the uneasy preacher.

"Don't it say dat de Lor' made de world, an' de sky, an' de stars, an' de sun an' de moon, an' eberyfing dat libs an' creeps, an' walks, and flies? Didn' he mek heaben an' de angels too? Didn' he mek de angels? Well, ain' de ol' Debbil jes' an angel dat turned bad an' become a debbil? Ain' he a bad angel? How yo' gwine s'pose an angel gwine be killed? How dem squim-

jim niggers up in Georgy gwine kill de Debbil? Ah reckon dat if de Debbil cud hab been killed, de Lor' would have killed him long time ago. Ain' yo' got no perceptiveness?"

WHEN the Reverend Skidder wended his homeward way after his call at the Goobers', he was possessed of a number of theological deductions of which he had never dreamed before. He felt that Randy's argument was a good one, but he feared the application would be difficult. However, he had bridged a gulf; for Randy had relented and made a conditional promise to come back into the Baptist fold. This was a victory which accorded him no little consolation. Also she had agreed to permit big Mose to accompany him on his proselytizing tour on the morrow. He was in a more composed frame of mind when he knelt at his bedside that night and returned thanks to the Lord.

But the next day's work, despite the valiant assistance of Mose, yielded no fruit. Late in the day the disheartened preacher and his faithful henchman found themselves resting in the shade of a big live oak down by the limpid waters of Rattlesnake Creek. It was a nice, cool spot, and they stretched themselves out wearily.

As they lay there, neither observed the proximity of a couple of other seekers of relief from the blazing intensity of the sun. But a few yards away, sitting on the end of a log under a clump of palmetto, was as interesting a specimen of the ultra-Ethiopian as ever mortal eye rested upon.

He was a short and very chubby negro, with the blackest of shiny skin. His type was not much out of the ordinary, but his attire was decidedly so. He wore a suit of light material diversified with enormous broad checks, and a scarlet vest. His cravat was a little dingy, but it was high to the point of his chin. An enormous paste diamond glittered on his shirt-front. His shoes were of patent leather, and his hat a fashionable Fedora. Upon every finger of his hands was a brass ring, each set with a different-colored stone, giving forth as a whole all the hues of the rainbow.

His companion at the other end of the log was a contratype, but none the less remarkable. Had he been standing, he would have advanced toward the zenith some seven feet; but he was so narrow and slender as to resemble nothing so much as a human clothespin. An enormous head

sat almost neckless on his narrow shoulders. His features were thin and cadaverous, his eyes deep-set and shifting, and the hue of his skin was ashen yellow. Sitting there on the log, with his knees reaching quite up to his chin, he looked for all the world like a folding rule. He was dressed in a sadly frayed frock coat and very dirty duck trousers. He wore a battered high hat which gave him a quasi-professional air.

These two odd characters were observing Mose and the parson with interest. The diminutive negro shot a comprehensive glance now and then at his elongated companion as they listened silently to the conversation of the newcomers. The subject became instantly edifying to them.

The Parson inveighed at length against the insidious doctrine with which the crafty Hi Betts had poisoned the social atmosphere of Gilead. As he progressed, his remarks became vituperative to the verge of profanity. The easy-going Mose ventured at length to remark encouragingly:

"'Pears laik yo' is worritin' a heap mo' dan is neserary, Pahson."

The Reverend lifted his head with a jerk.

"How be yo' meks dat out, son?"

"Didn' mah wife Randy prove dat de Debbil kaint be killed? Mah Randy, she neber meks no mistake."

With owl-like intensity the preacher looked at Mose.

"Ah ain' gwine argify dat yo' wife Randy am wrong," he admitted, "—least-wise, Ah ain' gwine argify dat wif her; but how yo' gwine kervince dem niggers of it?"

NOW, the abbreviated black boy on the log had listened attentively to the Parson's rehearsal, and being of remarkably astute mind, he had promptly acquired a complete understanding of the whole situation. What was more, with this comprehension there was born in his alert brain a sudden conviction that Fate had opened the switch and side-tracked a golden opportunity for him.

"Dis yeah ol' chap wif de spec's am de Baptis' minister ob dis yeah place, and de big nigger am one ob de prominent citizens," he reflected sagely. "Looks laik dere is trouble in Gilead. Dat saloon-keeper nigger done get all de minister's parish'ners away f'om de chu'ch by tellin' dem dat de Debbil is dead. Reckon dese Gilead niggers jes' laik a lot ob ripe per-

simmons. Shake de tree, an' dey all fall in a heap. Now, up in Loosyanna—"

His deductions, correct as they were, were interrupted by the despairing demand of the Parson:

"How yo' gwine kervince dem niggers ob it?"

Before Mose could answer, the diminutive black boy raised his voice.

"Scuse me, but hab yo' two gemmens got de time ob day?"

Mose sprung up as if stung by a wasp; and the Reverend, losing his balance, rolled over backward from his sitting posture. When both saw that the voice was human and not occult, they stared at the two strangers as if transfixed. Mose was the first to recover.

"Who am yo'?" he gulped.

"Only jes' plain nigger man." And the black boy grinned amiably.

"Wha' fo' yo' doin' ob heah?" demanded Mose curtly.

"Ah axes yo' to scuse us," said the little negro most ingratiatingly. "Ah hopes yo' wont fink us intrudin' on yo' privacy, but as we-uns was yeah fust off, looks laik de shoe is on de odder foot."

"We didn' mek out to see no one yeah when we come along," said Mose incredulously.

"Ah refers yo' to mah pardner, de extinguished Mistah Penny Wicks, if we warn't sittin' yeah on dis yeah log when yo' roosted undah dat tree whar yo' be now." The little negro indicated his friend with a grandiloquent gesture. With a voice like the rumble of distant thunder, the elongated one came back sotto voce:

"Dat am so!"

The Reverend Skidder had by this time regained his feet, his crumpled silk hat and to a certain extent his composure.

"We axes yo' pahdon, gemmens," he said with dignity. "De fus' comers hab de right, an' we gwine move our pussonalities to some odder spot, an' leabe yo' to yo' rightful own."

"Ain' no call fo' dat," protested the black boy graciously. "We-uns ain' got no mortgage on dis yeah lubly spot, an' yo' is welcome to our pore sassiety if so be yo' keers to accep' it."

The Parson and Mose exchanged glances.

"Mebbe yo' listen to our converse?" asked Mose.

"Yo' ain' conversed nuffin' we-uns ain' been cognizing ob," said the black boy. "Ain' no 'counting fo' de fools niggers will

mek ob deirselves when a bad man laik Hi Betts circumvents dem."

"So be, son," assented the Parson with a deep breath of gratification, and bending a kindly glance upon the diplomat. "'Pears to me yo' am a gemmen ob discrimingnation."

The black boy yawned slightly.

"Nuffin' laik trabbel to 'prove de mind, Pahson," he said languidly. "Niggers dat ain' nebber jogged a mile away f'om home ain' got no sharpenin' to deir wits."

The Parson pondered a moment. Deciding finally that the assertion was not meant to be personal, he asked:

"Reckon yo' gemmen am wha' de Scriptures call birds ob passage?"

The black boy flicked a speck of dust from his cuff and examined his manicured nails.

"Reckon we is, Pahson. Been mos' eberywhere dis side ob Tophet."

"Sho! Trabel am a great fing to open up de undahstandin'. It meks de mind to bloom laik de flower in de desert. Mebbe yo' trabel fo' yo' health or—"

"Ain' nobody chasin' ob us, Pahson. We trabbels mos'ly on business."

The Parson was curious.

"Dere's diffrun' kinds ob business, son."

"Sholy, sholy, Pahson. Mah business am managin'. Mah name am Tinker Lew. Mah friend yeah am Mistah Penny Wicks, de worl'-famous pussonator. Ah done be his manager. Mistah Wicks, he done do pussonatin' all ober de country. We jes' reckonin' on doin' some pussonatin' yeah in dis town ob Gilead for a li'le commiseration ob five cents admission."

The Reverend wrinkled his brow a moment in puzzled thought. He exchanged questioning glances with Mose.

"Don' jes' get yo' on dat pussonatin', son. Am it anyfing laik a raffle?"

Mr. Tinker Lew's keen little optics twinkled.

"Ain' no gamblin' game, Pahson. Mah friend an' me, we be good Baptis'."

"Ah is done glad to habe dat loosingdation," said the Reverend with deep relief.

"Yo see, Mistah Wicks, he pussonates odder people. He jes' put on a wig an' a custom an' change his face an' play a part. He am a gret stage actor."

Light broke in upon the Parson, and he hesitated dubiously.

"Ah done heah dat some ob de stage actors ain' sech bad sinners as some are."

"Sholy! We gib de people wha' dey

calls a moral show. Ah do de shoutin' an' pullin' in ob de crowd, an' Mistah Wicks he do de actin'. He can pussonate *Hamlet*, an' de *Merchant ob Venice*, an' *Julius Cæsar* an' a heap ob odders. He am a great actor."

The Reverend Skidder was deeply impressed, and as for Mose, his eyes violently rolled, and he experienced the delicious sense of personal contact with a profession for which he had always felt a deep awe. The Reverend tugged at his chin-whisker dubiously. He was considering if the same personal contact might not bemsirch the spirituality of his calling. Anyway, he decided to set aside his scruples for the time, for certainly these itinerant gentlemen were vastly interesting.

THEN Mr. Tinker Lew opened a great white canvas bag which he and his partner carried between them and displayed an assortment of wonderful costumes, wigs and other things theatrical, including a flute and a banjo. These musical instruments, he explained, were used to draw the crowd.

Very speedily both Mose and the Reverend began to feel as if they had always known Tinker Lew. He was so friendly and intimate that in the course of half an hour the shrewd little black boy had extracted from them full details of the distressing state of affairs in Gilead.

"Dat am berry extremitous," he mused, puckering his brow and twiddling his be-ringed fingers. "'Pears laik Ah knows a good way to bring dem niggers to deir senses."

The Reverend Skidder was interested.

"Mebbe yo' tol' me dat way," he asked eagerly. "Ah ain' got no idee mahse'f."

The wily little black boy scanned the smooth waters of the creek inscrutably. He screwed his thick lips into a slow whistle, and kept the melody up for some moments.

"Pahson," he said finally, "Ah reckons yo' knows a heap about de Scriptures an' about salvation, but Ah done reckon yo' ain' gwine get dem niggers back in yo' fold such a way. Ah ain' no heap ob a 'ligious man mahse'f, but Ah feels laik Ah is bound to gib yo' help if so be yo' is minded to accep' it. Ain' pressin' ob mah services on yo', but dis ain' no time fo' meking our regular pussonations in dis town. Ah would be berry glad to offer yo' some sudjestions if so be yo' keers to heah dem."

"Ain' no good reason fo' refusing yo' kind offer, son," said the Parson with increased eagerness. "If so be yo' keers to mek such an offerin' to de services ob de Lor', Ah is bound to spress mah delight to accep' de same."

TINKER LEW sat back a moment and reflected. Then a great broad grin separated his lips and he chuckled audibly. The chuckle ran into a laugh, and then increased to a veritable whoop until he was compelled to hold onto his sides, and tears coursed down his ebony cheeks. Mose and the Reverend were at a loss to grasp the meaning of his hilarity.

"Scure me, gemmens," said the black boy, finally subsiding, "Ah jes' had a berry funny inspellation. Ah sholy is gwine to gib dem Gilead niggers a jolt. Ah knows a way to mek dem huddle back into yo' chu'ch, Pahson, jes' laik a passel ob skeered lambs." Then, suddenly assuming deep gravity, he turned and placed a hand on the Reverend Skidder's knee. "Ah done axes yo' pahdon, Pahson, fo' mah levitations. Ah hab respect fo' yo' spi'itual powers, but dis ain' no case dat calls fo' dat kin' ob treatment. Yo' jes' got to apply business fishincy to dis yeah mattah, an' den yo' gits results. Does yo' grasp mah meanin'?"

The Reverend Skidder groped a moment vaguely but was compelled to admit:

"Ah don' jes' grab it, son."

"Den Ah splanify a li'le mo'. If yo' starts out in business, de fus' fing yo' mus' get to mek it a success is fishincy."

"Wha' dat fishincy?" inquired the Parson vaguely. "Am it in de Bible?"

"Sholy! When Moses led de Israelites froo de wilderness, he jes' couldn't hab done it if he hadn't de fishincy to do it. Ah done tol' yo' right yeah 'bout dat fishincy. 'Taint nuffin' yo' kin fin' or buy. It am suffin dat de Lor' put in yo' when yo' am bo'n into de world. Jes' laik dis: ef yo' got a blind mule, an' yo' swaps it wif anodder nigger fo' a good hoss an' gits money to boot, an' he don' find out de mule am blind till aftahwards, den yo' got de fishincy, an' he—he got de mule."

The Reverend passed a hand perplexedly across his brow, and Mose looked thoughtful. For the first time Mr. Penny Wicks cast a side-glance of interest at his partner.

"Ah done reckon dat fishincy business means gittin' de upper hand," ventured the Parson, light breaking in upon him.

"Jes' prezacly," asserted Tinker smooth-

ly. "If yo' kaint swap dat mule wifout it bein' foun' out dat he am blind, yo' ain' got no fishincy, an' yo' ain' gwine succeed in yo' business."

"'Pears laik dat am de safes' way to swap," assented the Parson.

"Das de ijee," continued Tinker. "Now, it am dis fishincy dat am gwine fool dis yeah Hi Betts and bring yo' strayed lambs back to de fold. Yo' jes' got to mek a business ob dat. If yo' hain' sell Hi Betts a blind mule wifout he findin' out dat de mule am blind, den yo' ain' got no fishincy, and yo' still hab de mule."

The Parson's jaw clicked grimly, but he said nothing.

"Dat am only a li'le 'lustration," explained Tinker. "Now, all dem niggers hab been made to beliebe by Hi Betts dat de Debbil am daid, an' dey ain' gwine fear him no mo'. Now, Ah ain' sayin' if de Debbil am daid or jes' skulkin' somewhere. Don' keer nuffin' 'bout dat. We jes' got to swap lies wif dat Hi Betts. We jes' got to mek dem fool niggers beliebe dat de Debbil am come to life an' am right yeah in Gilead an' come to get dem blasphemous niggers' body an' soul."

"How yo' gwine do dat, son?" The Parson looked incredulous but interested.

Tinker leaned forward impressively.

"By pussionation!" he whispere d hoarsely.

A FAINT glimmering of Tinker's meaning began to dawn on the Reverend Skidder, but it was not yet quite clear to him.

"Wha' yo' gwine pussonate?" he asked.

"De ol' Debbil."

"How yo' gwine do dat?" he asked in amazement.

Tinker indicated his colleague on the log.

"Dere am de pussonator right dere!" he said.

Then with a quick movement he jerked open the dunnage-bag again and explored its depths. Very quickly he drew out something vividly scarlet and held it up, revealing the tights, doublet and horned skull-cap of a *Mephistopheles* costume. It was complete even to the cloven hoof and spiked tail. Instinctively both Mose and the Parson recoiled and stared at it, for neither had seen its like before.

"Fo' de Lor'!" gasped the preacher apprehensively. "Am dem de clo'es ob de real Debbil hisse'f?"

Tinker laughed hilariously.

"Yo' needn't be skeered," he admonished. "It am only jes' a pussonator's custom for mekin' an imitation ob Satan."

For the first time the solemn visage of Penny Wicks cracked in a smile, and the two strolling players exchanged significant and amused glances. Then Tinker went up and whispered something in his colleague's ear. The great impersonator grabbed the scarlet costume and vanished in the bushes.

"Gemmens," said Tinker briskly, "yo' only hab to wait a li'le while fo' a demingstration ob de wonderful pussonatin' abilities ob mah friend."

Silently, but not without secret apprehension, Mose and the Parson waited. Tinker picked up his banjo and began to thrum a few weird notes. It was not long before a curious hiss and a sardonic, blood-curdling laugh emanated from the bushes. Then a terrible figure appeared. Seven feet tall it was, thin and lithe, with an enormous face painted ghastly white and set neckless on narrow shoulders. A couple of horns protruded from the head, and a forked tail lashed about the thin legs. Mose and the Parson gave one look—and dashed for the waters of the creek. And they would have taken a headlong dive into them but for the earnest remonstrances of Tinker.

"Ain' nuffin' to be skeered ob," he protested vigorously. "Ain' nuffin' but a pussonation."

Somewhat sheepishly Mose and the Parson checked their flight, but they kept a respectful distance from the "pussonator" during the demonstration. It was in every way satisfactory; and chuckling with triumph, Tinker waved his confrère back into the bushes to resume his own personality, and then began to elaborate.

"Yo' ain' gwine tol' me," he said earnestly, "dat we kaint mek dem niggers beliebe dat de ol' Debbil am come to Gilead. Dey done fall fo' dat pussonation laik ripe persimmons. Dat Hi Betts, he ain' gwine kervince dem no mo' dat it ain' so."

"Fo' de good Lor', son," said the Parson, mopping the profuse perspiration from his face, "Ah ain' neber gwine dispute yo' on dat p'int."

"Den Ah accep's dat yo' am sassified?"

"Puffeckly!" assured the Parson. "Ah am sassified dat it am de only fing to do, even if it am deceptifyin' mah parish'ners."

"Ain' yo' justified in a li'le deceptiveness?" asked Tinker bluntly. "Ain' yo' a right to fight de Debbil wif his own weapons?"

That settled the Parson's qualms. The "pussonator" reappeared quickly and took his seat on the log once more, even more taciturn than before. Then Tinker proceeded to lay out his plan of the great *coup*. The Parson and Mose listened with deep interest. As the plan grew, they waxed enthusiastic and jubilant.

"Yo' sholy am doin' de Lor' a gret serbice, Mistah Lew," affirmed the Parson. "De Lor' gwine purvide fo' dem dat does his wuk."

"Ain' axin' no pay ob de Lord," said Tinker modestly. "Ah gwine do dis job fo' nuffin'. Done reckon de Lor' had enough debts to pay wifout payin' me."

"Glory be!" said Mose devoutly.

"Now," said the industrious Tinker, "we jes' got to do some arrangifyin'. Ob co'se we cain't do nuffin' wifout we arrangify fings jes' right."

"We's gwine listen, son," said the Parson.

"Fus' fng we arrangify am to arrangify a revivin' meetin'."

"Hi! Wha' dat?" asked the Reverend Skidder.

"Dem niggers got to be revived," asserted Tinker solemnly. "Dey ain' gwine repent ob deir sins 'less dey be revived."

The Parson tugged at his chin-whisker. Of course, he knew what the little negro meant, for in his early ministerial life he had been a most energetic camp-meeting revivalist himself. However, now that he was an ordained minister in a settled parish, his conservative ideas of dignity led him to look askance at sensational methods. However, it did not take Tinker long to overcome his scruples.

"Ain' no odder way," persisted the little negro. "We gwine get a couple of barrels and stan' up befo' dat Black and Tan saloon. I tek mah banjo and sing an' do de shoutin' to git de crowd. Den yo' do de preachin'. Yo' lay down de law to dem niggers. Yo' tol' dem dat Satan am alibe, spite ob what dat sinner Hi Betts say. Yo' tol' dem dat Satan gwine come into Gilead at de rise ob de moon dis berry night, an' he gwine cotch ebery nigger he kin fin' outside ob de Baptis' chu'ch. Yo' gwine be in de pulpit when Satan come moseyin' up de street, and all dem niggers brek fo' de chu'ch. Ah gwine be at de

do'; and Mistah Goober, he be dere to he'p me; an' no nigger gwine git in dat chu'ch wifout he check up all de money he got on his pusson. Dey moughty glad to gib it to sabe deirselves from de Debbil, an' dat money done he'p yo' chu'ch kermittee to build a new chu'ch so be yo' wants to do it. How 'bout it?"

The Parson gasped, and Mose Goober's eyes rolled violently. The little negro's shrewd gaze noted both keenly while he waited.

It took some moments for the Reverend Skidder fully to grasp and analyze the scheme. A sudden gleam of appreciation came into his eyes, and he took off his spectacles and wiped them, while chuckle after chuckle welled up from his throat.

"Ah mus' say dat am jes' the fetchinigest plan Ah eber heerd ob," he gurgled.

"Da's de only way to revive dem sinners," averred Tinker.

"Ah gwine beliebe yo', son; but how 'bout dat moon? Hab yo' 'flected 'bout wha' time dat moon gwine appear?"

"Ah meks a speshial study ob de moon," assured Tinker. "Jes' as soon as de dark git in its wuk an' de fus' stars come out, dat moon gwine creep up right ober yender in de sky."

THIS assurance left nothing more to be desired. The good Parson was elated. He couldn't see how the plan could fail. Already the pæans of victory were ringing in his ears. He saw himself reinstated as the spiritual savior of Gilead, with his rescued lambs overflowing the fold, eager to come again under his benign leadership. A great thrill of gratitude to Tinker Lew welled up in his breast.

Very quickly the plans were completed. A few of the faithful, Elder Beanpole and Mose Goober in the lead, were to open and prepare the church. About an hour before sunset Tinker was to join the Parson, and they were to inaugurate their revival services before the Black and Tan saloon door. In the meantime the two strolling players were to remain in hiding down by the creek, and Mose was to smuggle some of Randy's best fried chicken down to them with which to fortify their physical system.

Mose sped away on his mission. The good preacher took an affectionate leave of his two new-found friends and leisurely pursued his way back to the parsonage, full to the chin with jubilant reflections.

What a wonderful come-back it would be! He would have his lambs back, suppliant and repentant. Nor did he forget the proposition of Tinker to extort toll at the church door. It would be gratifying indeed thus to make sure of a replenishing of the church treasury. He need no longer worry about his salary.

When he reached his lodgings—for the Reverend Skidder, being a celibate, boarded out—his first act was to close the door of his room, and after glancing cautiously about, he surreptitiously opened the door of a small closet and took therefrom a flask of corn juice. He smacked his lips heartily and slipped a few cloves into his jowl to annihilate any betraying odor. For the good preacher was only human after all. Then he reverted to the Book of Job and sought a suitable text.

Outside, the streets of Gilead were running riot with revelry. Coons were lounging idly at the corners, ogling the passing wenches, or gathered in groups staking their spare coin at craps or pitch-toss. The two saloons were crowded to the doors, and the odor of stale whisky was redolent everywhere. The wheels of industry were idle, and the gardens weed-grown. There was no evidence of aught but abandonment to recklessness and dissipation.

The doors of the First Baptist Church were wide open, and Elder Beanpole and Mose Goober were stationed there as a reception committee. But no one thought of venturing into the temple of worship. Indeed, former adherents of the faith trooped past with contempt and idle jest. It was a sad hour for Gilead, and none dreamed of the reckoning at hand.

It was lacking a couple of hours of sunset when the Reverend Skidder emerged from the parsonage, stately and dignified and armed with a lurid assortment of texts. At a signal from him, Mose and Elder Beanpole came down from the church-entrance and preceded him, carrying each a barrel. They attracted some idle attention as they turned into the cross-street and halted on the side opposite the Black and Tan saloon.

At the same time a little sawed-off specimen of negro, carrying a banjo and conspicuous for his sartorial equipment, appeared from an opposite direction. A score of darkies observed all this; though not until Tinker Lew mounted one of the barrels and began to twang his banjo did they affect to be interested. But when Tinker's

nimble fingers ran the staccato scale, they began to take notice.

And Tinker Lew was a banjoist of marvelous talent. This was recognized at once, and before he had rattled off a dozen bars he had a good-sized crowd about him. He banged and whanged industriously until the street was well filled. From all directions flocked the darkies, male and female, young and old, lame and halt, and of a variety of type beyond description. The Reverend Skidder had now mounted the other barrel and made a dignified, imposing figure, but he was accorded slight heed. All attention was concentrated upon the impudent, nimble Tinker, whose beaming fingers twinkled melodiously over the banjo-strings.

Ripples of applause began to go up, and there were calls for a song. Nothing loath, the irrepressible Tinker announced:

"Gemmens an' ladies, an' dem dat aint: Ah sho' will sing yo' a song dat am 'proprieate to dis occasion."

Then he keyed his banjo and began in a wonderful full tenor that thrilled upon the air and held the hearers entranced:

"Git abo'd, brudders, git abo'd!
Ain' yo' gwine git abo'd de ship?
Ain' no time to lose,
Git yo' hat an' shoes,
Git abo'd, sinners, git abo'd!
De ol' Debbil git yo' sho'—
He ain' gwine wait no mo',
If yo' don' git abo'd—git abo'd de
gospel ship."

Verse after verse floated out on an atmosphere that seemed to be electrically charged, until at last a number caught up the refrain with him. Tinker played and sang industriously, until his keen perception told him that he had reached the psychological moment. Then he stopped and ran his little keen humorous eyes over the crowd.

"Folkses," he said with a peculiar languid drawl, "Ah jes' got a few wo'ds to blow at yo' dat hab de time to listen, and dem dat ain' got de time, kin pass along on de odder side ob de street. As Ah casts mah eye on dis bunch ob corn-juice rastlers, Ah don' see none dat am any harndsomer dan mahse'f. Ah hab libbed wif negroes all mah life, an' Ah ain' got no call to tol' yo' wha' mah 'pinion ob dem am, 'cept dat dey ain' no bettah dan Ah am. If Ah wanted to borry a lead dollar, Ah sho' wouldn' go to mahself to borry it, fo' Ah done knows Ah would hab

pay it back, an' dat am strickly ag'in' negro principles to pay back borried money. Ah ain' axin' yo' to len' me a dollar, fo' Ah knows yo' wouldn' do it, kase yo' ain' got it to len'. But"—and Tinker paused a moment for the merriment to subside—"dere am a heap of folkses in dis town am lendin' somefin' mo' dan lead dollars, an' dat am deir souls. Dey am lendin' deir souls to de Debbil."

Laughter ceased, and a dead hush reigned for a moment. Then a voice piped up almost at Tinker's feet:

"De Debbil am daid!"

Instantly the statement was caught up and reiterated a score of times:

"Sholy! De Debbil am daid. Dere ain' no Debbil no mo'. Hallelujah!"

Tinker waited for an opening, and then went on:

"Ah is puffedckly conscious dat Ah am 'dressin mahself to a berry wise an' learned kermunity. Ah only jes' needs to cast mah eye ober dis mess ob grub-grabbers to recognize deir wonderful 'telligence. Ah comes yeah from a long way. If yo' looks ober yender to wha' de sky an' de yearth comes togedder, yo' kin know dat Ah comes from a long way beyant dat. Ah trabelled on mah own legs to git yeah, too. Ain' braggin' nuffin' 'bout my walkin' ability, but Ah tol' yo' one fing: if de Debbil was daid, Ah would neber hab got yeah, fo' he done he'p me on de way. Dat's how Ah happens to know dat de Debbil ain' daid, fo' he done chased me all de way from Loosyanna."

THERE was a sudden uproar in the crowd. Protests and jeers began to rise, but the wily Tinker was prepared for that. He caught up his banjo and began to twang and sing melodiously.

The power of music carried the pass. It suddenly occurred to the crowd that the music was worth the argument, and good humor reigned once more. When the proper moment arrived, as before, Tinker ceased playing and began to talk.

"If yo' ain' minded to beliebe me when Ah deputizes dat de Debbil chased me yeah from Loosyanna, Ah sho' is gwine to prove it to yo'. Ah done bet any nigger in de crowd, fo' to one, an' Ah ain' keering if it am dollars or peanuts."

"Hi, hi!" yelled a strapping buck negro. "If de Debbil chase yo' from Loosyanna, whar am he now?"

"Berry close to Gilead," retorted Tinker.

"He ain' gwine to git long yeah till aftah dark, but if yo' stays right yeah, yo' will sho' see him. He am headed fo' Gilead, an' he gwine burn ebery negro in dis place wif de fires ob hell when he gits yeah."

Yells of derision greeted this announcement. Just then, from the swinging door of the Black and Tan, a portly, pock-marked negro stepped forth. There was a generally prosperous air about him which distinguished him from the others. The crowd parted before him, and he stalked straight up to the barrel on which Tinker stood.

"Mah name am Hi Betts," he said truculently. "Ah ain' jes' pleased wif all dis ruction in front ob mah saloon, but Ah ain' lettin' no easy money float away when Ah sees it. Ah is gwine to accep' yo' offer ob fo' to one dat de Debbil ain' daid."

The crowd fairly quivered with wild excitement. There was a swaying and surging to get closer. The Reverend Skidder tried to fix a condemnatory gaze upon the apostle of sin, but the saloon-keeper ignored him contemptuously. Tinker, with his hands in his pockets, was the coolest individual present. He regarded the saloon-keeper a moment tentatively and then smiled ingratiatingly.

"Ain' neber had de pertickler honah ob meetin' up wif yo' befo', Mistah Betts," he said genially. "Yo' don' min' if Ah don' intringduce mah name, fo' de ol' Debbil am chasin' me an' Ah ain' no stummick to let him know wha' Ah am."

"Ah don' keer nuffin' 'bout yo' name," scoffed the saloon-keeper derisively, "but yo' kaint camp down in front ob mah saloon do' an' mek no fool bets ag'in' a suah fing. Ah gwine bet yo' ten dollars eben—ain' axin no fo' to one odds. Hab yo' got ten dollars in yore clo'es?"

Now, Mr. Hi Betts had not the least idea that Tinker could produce that sum. He looked for a sickly back-down on Tinker's part, and the breaking up of the show. He grinned as he waited.

Tinker considered his beringed fingers a moment, and then, thrusting a hand deep in his pocket, leaned forward:

"Mistah Betts," he said with an engaging smile, "Ah mus' spress mah thanks fo' yo' courteous offah, but Ah don' waste mah time mekin' such small bets."

The crowd gaped. Hi Betts' face swelled with anger.

"You li' swamp-rat!" he hissed. "Yo' neber seen ten dollars in yo' life."

Tinker never lost his smile.

"If Ah am dat animile yo' jes' called me, Ah ain' no need to feel afeard ob yo', fo' a skunk wont eat a swamp-rat."

Hi Betts raised his big fist threateningly.

"Yo' dast to insult me?" he snarled. "Ah gwine squash yo' laik a house-fly."

He made a move toward the diminutive negro, but quick as thought Tinker juggled his elbow, and a nice, clean, keen-edged razor rested in his right hand.

"Ah is gwine wait fo' yo' to squash me, Mistah Betts." He was still smiling, but there was a deadly light in his black eyes.

The saloon-keeper drew back a little. The scowl didn't leave his face, but he didn't attack Tinker. As a matter of fact, the moral effect of the razor and the advantage of Tinker's position on the barrel was sufficient hindrance. But he realized that his hand had been called by this insignificant little black boy, and he must make a showdown or be exposed to the ridicule of those about him. So he snarled:

"Well, how much will yo' bet? If yo' ain' sassified wif mah offer, yo' name de figger."

Tinker reflected a moment. "Will yo' bet twenty dollars?" demanded Betts. Tinker snapped his fingers.

"Will yo' bet a hundred?" The saloon-keeper was sure this would effectually squelch the little negro.

Tinker shook his head.

"Yo' ain' got no stummick to bet no way," scoffed Betts, turning triumphantly to the crowd, but Tinker now spoke:

"If Ah ain' got de stummick, yo' ain' got de money to meet mah bet."

Betts whirled savagely.

"Am yo' gwine bet or not?" he demanded.

"Hab yo' got fifteen hundred dollars in yo' clo'es?" asked Tinker imperturbably.

The saloon-keeper gasped.

"Fifteen hundred dollars?" he articulated.

"Dat am de smallest amount Ah am gwine to bet wif yo'," said Tinker with an affected yawn. "If yo' ain' prepared to show down dat much money, jes' go back into yo' saloon an' wait fo' de Debbil to come an' get yo' right aftah sundown."

"Yeah, yo' li'le lambasted nigger," blustered Betts. "S'pose yo' show down fifteen hundred yo'se'f!"

"Ain' no call to 'less yo' do de same."

"Yo' kaint do it," scoffed Betts.

THERE were derisive laughs that jarred on Tinker's hearing. The black faces below him were unfriendly. Perhaps it was this that prompted him to act. One hand slid down into his trousers pocket. Out came a fat roll of greenbacks. Tinker slipped a rubber band from the roll and tallied off fifteen one-hundred-dollar bills, without much shrinkage of the roll.

"Ah is gwine to put dis in de hands ob de Reveren', heah," he said, flirting the bills before the astounded saloon-keeper's eyes. "Now, Mistah Man, if yo' wants to call mah hand, yo' gwine put up de same li'le bit ob change."

The saloon-keeper regarded the money with an amazed and greedy gaze. Avarice showed in his puffy face. Then his jaw dropped, for he realized that this money which looked 'so soft to him was far beyond his reach. His worldly possessions, including the entire stock of his saloon, would not total five hundred dollars. He couldn't cover the stakes, and so to save his face he began to hedge.

"Yo' s'pose Ah put up fifteen hundred dollars in de han's ob dat gospel-dispenser?" he jeered. "Wha' yo' fink Ah am? Ain' gibbin no money to de chu'ch. Ain' takin' no sech chainces."

Then Tinker's eyes blazed. It was his moment of victory. He continued to flirt the bills triumphantly.

"Dat am a berry bad scuse," he jeered. "Yo' ain' got no fifteen hundred. Yo' jes' a cheap man, an' yo' sendin' de souls ob dese fool niggers to hell fo' to fill yo' pockets wif money. I bets yo' fifteen hundred dollars dat de Debbil come into dis town jes' arter de sun go down, an' he am gwine to git yo' too. Yo' gwine git a free ride to de bottomless pit. Ah axes all yo' niggers to listen. Dis man am a liar! De Debbil ain' daid. He comin' into Gilead tonight. He am on his way. Any nigger foun' outside the Baptis' chu'ch arter de sun goes down—de Debbil gwine git him. Mistah saloon-man, yo' gwine on back into yo' saloon an' git down on yo' knees an' pray, fo' yo' ain' nebber gwine sell no mo' corn-juice in Gilead. Now, Ah am gwine gib up dis platform to de belubbed Pahson, an' yo' listen to his preachin' an' sabe yo' souls. He gwine tol' yo' how, an' he am de only one kin sabe yo' from old Satan an' his hell-fire."

Tinker bowed very courteously to the

crowd and to the Reverend Skidder and stepped back, at the same time slipping the prodigious roll of greenbacks, which was nothing but stage money, back into his pocket.

THERE was a dead hush on the crowd. It was plain that they were tremendously impressed. With a snarl of rage Hi Betts slid back, defeated but vengeful, into his saloon. Then the Reverend Skidder launched into a sermon such as only he could deliver. He perorated and pranced and boomed and bellowed. It was his action more than his words that held his listeners, for few understood his diction. He emphasized the warning given out by Tinker. He offered most convincing arguments that the Devil was immortal, and only God had the power to kill him.

"Mah dear parish'ners," he stormed, "am yo' gwine let a passel of Georgy niggers jam dat lie down yo' gizzards? Am yo' gwine beliebe dere am any niggers up in dat fo'gotten corner ob de yearth smart enough to kill ol' Satan? Yo' jes' beliebe wha' mah frien' heah say. Jes' as sho as ol' Moses made de ten kermaments, de Debbil gwine come to Gilead tonight. Look ober yender an' see de sun jes' hidin' his face. Jes' as soon as de dark come, yo' gwine see ol' Satan comin' up dis street, jes' moseyin' along an' spittin' hell-fire all around him. Dey ain' but jes' one place he won' dare go, an' dat's de Baptis' chu'ch. Ah is gwine be at de chu'ch to welcome all dat am repentant an' dat wants to be saved. Glory, brudders! Shout fo' glory! Come along an' be sated."

When the parson's shouting become tiresome and the crowd showed signs of tiring, Tinker grabbed his banjo and struck up a lively camp-meeting song. The crowd came back on the instant. By this time there was no remote corner of Gilead that had not received news of the lively doings down in front of the Black and Tan saloon, and it was safe to say that pretty near the entire population was present.

At last the sun dropped out of sight, and night crept in with rapidly increasing shadows. Tinker was keeping one eye on the end of the street, anticipating the arrival of his side partner and the precipitation of the climax. Suddenly he felt a tug at his coat-tail. A pickaninny was making frantic signs with his fingers, and Tinker, acting on impulse, stooped to listen.

"Mistah," said the pickaninny, "mah maw, she done tol' me to gib yo' warnin' dat Hi Betts got a passel ob toughs to-gedder in his saloon, and dey gwine come out pretty quick an' brek up yo' meetin'. Dey am a passel ob swamp-niggers, an' dey jes' gwine gib yo' a beatin' up."

Tinker heard this interesting communication without batting an eyelash.

"Am dat so?" he mused defectively. "Dat am berry kin' ob yo' maw. Yo' jes' run back and tell her Ah is berry much 'bliged, but if dem niggers gits too familiar, Ah is gwine cyarve mah initials on deir faces wif mah razzar."

Then Tinker's hand slipped from his pocket, and he dropped a five-cent coin in the little chap's hand. It was lead, but he didn't believe the pickaninny would know the difference.

JUST then the saloon door swung wide, and out trooped half a dozen negro bucks. They swept a lane through the crowd and had nearly reached the Reverend Skidder's rostrum, and the preacher had stopped his preaching in apprehension, when a wild yell came from down the street.

Into view came a seven-foot figure, scarlet-clad, white-faced, horned and hoofed and switching a forked tail viciously. He held an unearthly blazing object in his hand. He ambled along leisurely, but that fact tempted no black man in the throng to give more than one glance in his direction.

In less time than it takes to tell it, that portion of Gilead was depopulated. Sprinting records were broken right and left, but none outfooted Tinker Lew on the way to the church. He was there, joining Mose Goober, as the first delegation arrived.

Meanwhile, Mephistopheles invaded the Black and Tan saloon and paused a moment or two to refresh his thirsty throat at the expense of the house, for none were there to say him nay. Skip Jack, the worst colored desperado in the South, who led the swamp gang, went through a rear window, sash and all. Hi Betts went over the bar without touching it, and through a back door, leaving all his worldly goods behind him. Satan had a great old time, for the freedom of the town was his. He next went over to the Black 'Possum to find it also deserted. He proceeded to ramble about at random, finally drawing near to the Baptist church. This sanctuary he

did not dare invade, but continued to hover about, while frantic backsliders fought to get within the sacred portals.

At the door Mose and Tinker Lew were having a busy time collecting all kinds of money. Mose fought the crowd back with his giant strength, while Tinker extorted the admission-fee. The little negro's pocket bulged with coins ranging from a penny to a fifty-cent piece. Those who had no money were given the cold shoulder, and the bitter consolation for making for the swamps.

The Reverend Skidder reached his pulpit to face the largest congregation of his career. To attempt description of the preacher's emotions would be idle. Napoleon at Austerlitz, Wellington at Waterloo, Julius Cæsar at the height of his power could not have experienced the crowning glory of victory that came to the good parson of Gilead. His black face shone with the mighty exaltation of his soul as he bent over his pulpit and assured the kneeling multitude that the church would protect them, that repentance would save them and drive Satan back to his own fiery domains.

FEW sinners had the courage to return to their homes that night. Many slept in the church; others sneaked shivering into the purlieus of the big swamp; some crept down to the creek and remained up to their necks in water till morn; but the good parson slid into his comfortable bed shortly after midnight and slept the sleep of the guileless until long after dawn.

It was not until after Sunday that Gilead began to settle back into its normal condition. The Reverend Skidder preached to enormous congregations, expounding many truths, quoting various Scriptural precedents, and finally assuring his repentant flock that there was no longer need for fear, for Satan's trip to Earth was terminated, and he had gone back to the bottomless pit. He hinted, however, that backsliding might bring him back at any moment.

So happiness and peace, and order and chastened spirit, reigned once more in Gilead. The good parson had been so occupied with his duties attendant upon the regeneration of his parish that he had almost forgotten the two strolling players. He was deeply conscious of the enormity of the service they had rendered him, but

not having seen or heard from them since that eventful evening, he fell to wondering.

He reflected that it was of course wise prudence on their part to remain in the background, but he felt that it was about time for Tinker Lew to show up and make an accounting of the gate-receipts. These, the Reverend felt, were considerable, and he smacked his lips with deep satisfaction as he thought of the mighty swelling of the church funds it would mean.

But days passed, and still Tinker didn't appear. The Parson was of trusting mind, and did not relinquish faith. Certainly a young man who had stood by his side so loyally in a great fight for the salvation of the church must be above suspicion. He would not believe that Tinker was anything but honest and true. He told himself that he would be sure to hear from him very soon, even if he did not have the pleasure of seeing him. Nor was he wrong in this assumption. He did hear from Mr. Lew by letter, postmarked in a distant city. The Reverend Skidder broke the seal and scanned the inclosed slip of paper long and perplexedly, though the scrawl was very brief and painfully comprehensive.

MEMORANDUM

GILEAD BAPTIST CHURCH

In account with Lew an Wicks pussonators.
 Dettor....To purfessional survice....\$39.70
 Credit....By kash\$39.76

Ballans06

Reseeved Pai

Lew an Wicks.

Six very dingy pennies reposed in the corner of the envelope. The Reverend juggled them a moment in the palm of his hand, pursed his lips and mused:

"Fo' de Lor's sakes! Howebber Ah gwine get mah salary now?"

There was a glimmer of anger and disappointment beneath the shaggy eyebrows; but it was fleeting. Slowly his bosom began to heave, and chuckles deep and profound welled from his throat.

"Ain' no call to find fault wif dat li'le due-bill," he decided philosophically. "Dis parish hab been washed white ob its sins, an' it suah am wuf de price. Dat li'le nigger sho und'stan's dat fishincy stuff to a frazzle. Ah ain' nowise sassified 'bout dat pussonator. Ain' so daid suah but dat he mought be de real ol' Debbil hisse'f, aftah all."

Leatherneck Tales

Something to Live For



Barney Furey

STRETCHED out upon the lace-bedecked cushions of a first-class coach of the Paris-Nancy express were Sergeant Ed Delaney and Corporal Mickey Brogan of the United States Marines, enjoying immensely the sensation which can come only to an enlisted man entitled to second-class passage, who through some grand vagary of fortune has been listed accidentally as an "Officier Américain" and ushered into a first-class carriage. The inland Frenchman is not accustomed to the bright blue and red and gold of a Marine's ship-uniform and the unfamiliarity had brought happiness to the two leathernecks, journeying from Paris to Château-Thierry for what might be their last look at the shrine of the Marine Corps, Belleau Wood. When the good old battle-wagon *New Mexico* reached Newport News again, an event of great importance would come about for Ed and Mickey—the end of another enlistment. And the result thereof right now was a matter of argument.

True, both men had seen enlistments end before, both had taken their regulation furlough, and then gone back to four years more of soldiering in the Corps and an additional hash-mark on their sleeves.

True, both of them were approaching the time when the Marine Corps would tell them that there was no longer need for their services and give them the reward for duty well and faithfully done, retirement and the steady pay for life which goes with it. But counterbalancing that was the fact that back in New York was an old ex-Colonel of Marines who had commanded them first when he was a bright, new shavetail, just out of Annapolis, who liked them, who was at the head of a big business now and who had offered them a place for as long as they cared to remain, at three hundred dollars a month! And the dollar sign was tempting them, as it has tempted many a good Marine.

"Gosh! That's a lot of money!" Mickey Brogan said it for the twentieth time as he gazed through the car window toward the hastily made trenches and barbed-wire entanglements still remaining on the edge of Paris, a reminder of the time, nearly two years gone, when frenzied poilus had worked day and night on a last line of defense, which, happily, never was used. "Three hundred beans is a lot of jack, Ed. Are you sure he said three hundred?"

IN answer, Ed Delaney unbuttoned his blouse and brought forth a letter, relayed on from Bordeaux by a kindly Jimmylegs, to unwittingly add excitement to an otherwise-peaceful three-days furlough. Rocking with the motion of the train over the thin, unstaggered rails, Delaney unfolded the paper and gazed hard at it.

"Yes," came finally, "that's what he says—'three hundred apiece!'"

"But it sort of sounds like a spotter's job."

Delaney grunted.

"You're crazy. What he wants us to do is to circulate among the men and find out what's wrong—what they need to make their working lives better and happier. That's all. And if it makes contented workmen, it's worth the money."

Mickey sighed happily.

"That's sure a wad of money, Ed. We could do a lot on that."

"We sure could!"

"Gosh! We could have a seventy-five-dollar-a-month apartment and a woman to cook for us and—"

"Be in New York all the time!"

"Good Lord!"

Then there was silence for a moment; while Ed Delaney stared hard at the filigree designs of the lace-covered seat opposite him and while Mickey Brogan looked through the window—at the incessant drizzle of a winter day in France. Both of them had experienced that drizzle in other days, days in which their railroading had consisted of crowded trips in cars labeled "*8 Chevaux—40 Hommes*," days in which the raw chill had eaten into their very bones, when corned Willie and a small mountain of "frog bread" had tasted like a banquet more than once, but days that were happy ones, nevertheless. For those were days when they had laughed at the various exploits of old Dan Daly, the perpetual hero of the Corps, with his two medals of honor and his pipe stuffed together in his hip-pocket; days of delight over the return of a "foraging expedition" from the camp of some new draft-outfit, bearing everything except the captain's bars and the galley-stove; days when the rain and cold and cheerlessness of northern France were forgotten in the warm happiness of a *rhum chaud* at some little café in a rest area, or the hearty excitement of a crap game in a dugout, with the "sea bags" dropping in monotonous succession outside, and the constant gamble as to

which was to appear first, a pass of the dice or a high-explosive hole in the roof. And with all this on the stage of recollection, they remained silent until the train had rattled through Meaux and was skirting the Marne on the last lap of the journey to Château-Thierry. Then Mickey turned from the window.

"Ed," he said slowly, "I wonder if we'd ever get lonesome?"

"For the old gang?" Delaney shuffled his feet. "I was just thinking about that, Mickey."

"It'd sure make us feel funny, wouldn't it, to read about some spick scrap down in Santo Domingo—and know we'd never be in anything like that again!"

"Yeh—and it'd just about be our luck for the fleet to make another trip around the world."

"That last cruise sure was a humdinger, wasn't it?"

"It was, you know!" And Ed Delaney grinned with the recollection. Then suddenly he became serious. "I'm afraid it's us for the old thirty-six and thirty-eight a month, with the extras, Mickey!"

"I guess so." The bald little corporal had become doleful. "We'd be missing a lot of things, Ed. It aint as if we were tied to something besides the money. If we were married or—"

"You've got it, Mickey. We wouldn't have anything to live for but just ourselves, and the fun of buying things would wear out on us after while. Maybe we'd better write to the Colonel and tell him we can't take the job."

"I guess so."

Then they were mute again, until the train came to its wheezing stop and the blue-and-white enameled sign of the *gare* betokened Château-Thierry.

A DIFFERENT Château-Thierry now, from the torn, gaunt thing that once lay in boche hands. Two years had made a difference; the "P. G.'s," green-clad German prisoners of war, had replaced many of the stones which had been scattered from the musty old buildings by the shell-fire of opposing armies. Here and there along the narrow streets as the Marines trod the cobblestones from the railroad station, signs in garbled English invited the tourist within, to the purchase of souvenirs and post-cards. Smoke curled from the high-built chimneys above the mossy green of the moldy tile roofs. There were

lights in the store-windows with their displays of fish fresh-caught from the Marne, frogs' legs, snails and cheese. Peasants, their heavy sabots clattering, ambled about with great loaves of bread, like enormous quoits, hooked over their arms, gossiping and passing from one to another the wonderful information that the weather was not hot. Ed Delaney grunted.

"Same old bunch, aint they?" he asked. "I believe they'd be cheerful in an earthquake. I don't know about you, but I feel like some *jambon* and a couple of *œufs*."

MICKEY assented; they turned into a tiny restaurant for an imitation meal of ham and eggs. Then, skirting down a side-street, they sought the town's one livery.

The same old black wagon that the two Marines had known in the days shortly after the ending of the war still awaited customers, but prices had increased, the inevitable result of a tourist influx. Delaney exhausted his French; then the sergeant brought forth a fifty-franc note. Ten minutes more and they rolled past the ancient, shell-scarred cemetery at the edge of town on their way to Belleau Wood.

Memories! That was why they had come. Memories—memories to be refreshed before they sailed away again, never, perhaps, to return. Memories of the wood where their comrades had died, where, twelve miles from the little city of Château-Thierry, the Fifth and Sixth Marines had seen their ranks cut from eight thousand to two, where raw replacements, fresh from the big depots at Quantico and Paris Island, had gone through incessant shell-fire to the front lines, there to fight like veterans, where men were heroes and forgot the fact, where companies dwindled to squads and squads to individuals, where dying captains passed their commands to lieutenants, lieutenants to grizzled old top-cutters, and on down the line, until, a ragged thing under a bleeding corporal, the remnant which remained went forward to extermination, yet never faltered.

Every bit of the country was to them like the opening of some book, read long ago. Here, by the roadside, still remained fragmentary evidences of the tremendous ammunition dumps which once had stretched for miles; now and then they bumped across the narrow, rusty tracks of the miniature railroads, yet unsalvaged, that once had formed the link between roaring batteries of *soixante-quinzes* and

their bases of supply. Blackened by weather, but stalwart nevertheless, a little cross under the bare dripping trees, still with its creased French helmet in place, still with its wording of "*Bon Soldat*" faintly visible, told of the fact that the wounds of war yet were reddened and feverish, and with their mute emphasis bespoke the sorrowful sacrifice of a grave by the roadside. The Marines forgot that letter from the old ex-Colonel. They were living in another world. Kilometer after kilometer—then the jogging black wagon stopped, on that narrow ribbon of macadam which leads from Bouresches to Lucy-le-Bocage. Silently, Mickey and Ed alighted and stood looking for a moment at the evil, gaunt stretch of forest a short quarter of a mile away, its trees still twisted and torn, its charred spaces still displaying the effects of the shell-fire that had ripped out its vitals nearly two years before. The rain had ceased and the sun was beginning to gleam faintly, but even this failed to add cheer to the scene before them, failed to soften the gaunt horror of the torn, black woods.

AT last they started forward—then stopped. Mickey had pointed to a field, near by, where a French peasant, a collie dog trotting at his side, was chirping and clucking at an old white horse, as he plowed the ground for the planting of early spring.

"Aint that the field where we got all cut up?" he asked.

Ed Delaney squinted.

"Yeh." Then he sought to grin. "Looks funny to see a frog plowing there, don't it? The day we went across it, they sure were sending over the hardware!"

"Everything but the kitchen stove. Speaking of hardware, how long does it take a dud to wear out?"

"Wear out?"

"Yeh, so it wont explode if you happen to kick against it?"

"Darned if I know. Years, I guess. Why?"

Mickey Brogan pointed to the nose of an unexploded shell, sticking a few inches above the ground just at the edge of a small stream.

"Then I guess we'd better watch our step. There's a lot of sudden death laying around here. I wonder who the old frog is."

Delaney squinted again.

"Must own the land. Let's go *parler* him a bit—kind of interests me to meet the bird who owns the place, we almost got killed in."

They skirted the little stream, picking their way carefully through the dead grass to avoid the danger of "duds" or unexploded shells, and started across the fringe of fresh, black loam toward the Frenchman. Delaney waved a hand.

"*Bon jour!*" he called.

The man at the plow "whee'ed" to his sway-backed old white horse, and turned, the dog barking excitedly at his side.

"Golemar!" he chided, and the collie ceased. A broad grin came to the plowman's face.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, then bent forward and narrowed his eyes as they came closer, centering his gaze on the bronze devices of their caps. "*Soldat de la Marine! Ah, oui!* I know you."

"What do you know about that?" Mickey grunted. "The guy parlays English." Then he grinned. "Good soldier—*bon soldat!*" he exclaimed, pointing to the plowman's breast. For there, on the cheap, ragged blouse, was the proudest thing that a soldier of the Republic can wear, the *Médaille Militaire*. The plowman grinned more happily than ever and indicated, in return, the campaign bars on the blouses of Mickey and Ed, with their citation stars of gleaming silver and the five bronze emblems which told a story that stretched from the Marne to the Meuse.

"You pretty good too!" he chuckled. Then he held forth his soil-grimed hand. "I am Gustave du Clait."

They shook hands, somewhat gravely. Then the Frenchman laughed happily and pointed toward the little stone house at the far end of the field, careening awkwardly at one end, where some great shell had sent its stone walls scattering in a dozen directions.

"*Petite Madeleine*, she will be overjoy! She know you, *m'sieurs!*"

"Knows us?" The Marines stared blankly. Gustave du Clait's grin became broader than ever.

"*Ah, oui!* And my good horse Limey and my dog Golemar!"

HE waved his hands excitedly, and his broken English vanished. He was talking in his own tongue now, talking fast and excitedly, while Mickey Brogan stared in non-understanding interest and while Ed

Delaney, striving his best to catch the rapidly spoken phrases, interjected a question now and then in faltering French, and then became silently attentive again.

The reins lay loose on the back of the good horse Limey now; the dog Golemar bounced about unnoticed. Minute after minute the story streamed forth, unintelligible in its swiftness to wondering little Mickey, entralling to Ed Delaney. Once tears came to the eyes of the peasant who wore the *Médaille Militaire*, tears which glistened proudly on his cheeks and were not wiped away. His voice trembled; then the story stopped. Slowly he turned and grasped absently at the handles of his plow; then, with a sudden motion, stepped to one side and beckoned.

"Come!" he said in English. "I show you something!"

ACROSS the field he led them and to a little stretch of wood, less scarred by explosives and shrapnel than the denser growths of the hills above. He stopped and motioned, while instinctively the two Marines reached for their caps. Before them were three little mounds, each with its straight, proud cross, each with its glass funeral-wreath, peculiar to the French, each with its little metal container, into which pieces of evergreen lately had been placed. About it all was a rustic fence, with a gate, carefully fashioned, and upon it a smooth, pine board into which had been carved:

*Bon Soldat
De la
U. S. MARINE.*

Proudly Gustave stood by the gate, and proudly he pointed to the little containers with their bits of evergreen.

"*Petite Madeleine!*" he explained. "She does not forget the good soldier. Each day she comes, lest a cross fall or the bouquet wither. Some day"—he beamed—"I shall take *la petite Madeleine* to *l'Amérique!*"

The Marines nodded; then Mickey moved close to his sergeant.

"I thought the Graves Registration Service had—"

But Du Clait had caught the implication. Quickly he opened the gate and went to the mounds. He patted a cross, tenderly.

"Gone now," he said, indicating the bodies that once had lain beneath. "*Officiers Américains* ordered them to the big—what you say?—cemetery at Soissons. But

they could not take our memory—or our love. *Ah, oui*, we remember!”

He came forth then, to find Delaney stretching forth a hand.

“I’m just an enlisted man,” the sergeant was saying, “but I want to thank you—and I know the Marine Corps will thank you—”

“Bah!” Gustave du Clait laughed and fenced away from the expression of gratitude. “It is I, Gustave du Clait, who gives the thanks. I—I—” Then, embarrassed by the attitude of the man before him, he moved hastily back toward his plow. “Sometime I bring *la petite Madeleine* to *l’Amérique* and I ask you to help me—so she can grow up like the *mesdemoiselles* in *Amérique*. Then we shall see! *Ah, oui!* I have done nothing—it is I who am thankful! I—I—*bon jour, m’sieurs!*”

HE hurried away, and the two Marines turned toward the gaunt woods. Mickey stared inquiringly up at his companion.

“What’s the racket, Ed?”

“A whole lot, Mickey. He told me a pretty big story back there in the field.”

“About what?”

“Himself—and his little girl.” They were moving now toward the rocky crevices which once had held seemingly inexhaustible nests of boche machine-guns. “It kind of made a lump come into my throat to listen to him. He was up around Montdidier when the boches cut through the lines around the *Chemin des Dames* and on to *Soissons* and *Château-Thierry*—and he cou’dn’t find out what had happened to his wife and little kid. She was only four then, I think he said.”

They had stopped in a scrawny thicket and Mickey, pulling out his knife, began to dig forth a memento in the shape of a shrapnel bullet which had lodged just beneath the bark of a scrub-oak sapling.

“Sure must have been tough to have to fight under conditions like those,” he grunted.

Ed Delaney, leaning against a sagging tree, assented.

“It must, you know. It was more than a month before he found out about ’em; then the mayor of Meaux sent him word that the kid was safe with a lot of other refugees who were being taken care of there. The mother was dead, it seems; killed by the shell that tore up the house. Some of our outfit—must have been the

Forty-third Company—took to the house for protection from machine-gun fire and heard the dog, growling. They looked around to see what was doing, and found the mother dead and the kid stretched out beside her, nearly starved. The dog was keeping watch over ’em. About that time, somebody discovered the old horse, in his stall, chewing away at his hay-rack, and the whole thing was reported to the captain. He ordered the woman put in as good a grave as possible and the kid and horse and dog taken behind the lines. The detail that carried out the command went through a barrage to do it.”

Mickey whistled softly, then, extracting the shrapnel bullet, stared hard at it before he placed it in his pocket.

“No wonder he’s grateful,” came at last.

“Yes,” was added in the sympathetic voice of Ed Delaney as they started toward the crest of the hill, “and no wonder the poor old guy cried when he told me about it. That wasn’t any cinch for him, Mickey, standing hitched day after day, with death in front of him and worse behind. I’d a lot rather be dead than up against a thing like that—wondering every minute what’d happened, whether my wife and kid were safe or begging for mercy from some square-headed boche!”

“And we can’t understand it all, either,” Mickey agreed. “We’ve never had anything of that kind—I sometimes wish, Ed, that I did have something to worry about, somebody that I could live for—or—or—”

HE ceased then, and together they continued the breath-taking pull toward the top of the hill. About them were the evidences of other days in Belleau Wood, days when the heavy fronds of the great ferns had concealed the big rocks over which they now clambered, and in that concealment sheltered the weapons which sent a steady hail of steely death toward the slow-advancing lines of United States Marines. Here was a tree, cut down as sharply as though by some keen-bladed saw; far to one side, a crevice under the rocks where naval surgeons, hospital apprentices and pharmacists’ mates had worked day and night in their advanced dressing-station, while leading away from it still showed the wires, stretched from tree to tree, which had formed a guide to the rescue parties who, by night, had lugged back the wounded. They stopped and viewed the scene grimly. Then Ed De-

laney brushed a hand across his eyes as though to clear them of the unwelcome visions.

"Think, Mickey, of going through what we went through here—with the safety of a wife and baby on your mind!"

"It was tough, all right! No wonder he talks about that kid so much. What was all that he was saying about America?"

"That? Oh, that's his big idea. He told me a lot about it while he was parlaying in French. One more crop and then he's going to pull out. Wants to take the kid to the United States and raise her an American girl. That's about all he thinks about. Wasn't able to do much with the farm last year, but this summer he figures on getting a good crop and selling out. I don't blame him. I'd sure hate to live in a place like that."

"Yeh, with memories around you all the time, like that shell-hole, for instance. Every time I'd look at that—"

A sharp, bursting roar from the distance cut off the rest of the sentence, a roar such as the men had heard in these woods in days gone by. Instinctively they went to their stomachs; then with the silence which followed, grinned sheepishly and rose. Delaney shrugged his shoulders.

"Thought we were being shelled again," came with a grunt as he brushed the dead leaves from his uniform. "Listen—what's that?"

A faint shout had sounded, the cry of some one calling for aid. Hurriedly the two Marines clambered to the topmost of the rocks, whence they could look into the field below. Then, suddenly white-faced, forgetful of the obstacles in their path, regardless of pitfalls or dangers, they leaped from their point of vantage and began to run with all their strength. Again, in Belleau Wood, they had looked upon the billowy smoke of death!

THE jagged barbs of thorny underbrush caught and tore at their uniforms, but they did not notice. Once, Mickey, in the lead, stumbled as he struck a jutting boulder and plunged over a small ledge, to lie dazed a second, ten feet below, until the sinewy Delaney had caught him beneath the arms and raised him to his feet.

"Hurt?"

"No. Just my breath knocked out. Let's hurry!"

Once again the scrambling journey began, at last to bring the men into the

open—and racing toward a round, jagged pit in a weed patch far at one side of the field, smoking and acrid from the fumes of high explosive.

An excited man beckoned to them—the driver of the black wagon in which they had come from Château-Thierry. They veered toward him, but swerved to avoid the torn carcass of what once had been the faithful old Limey. A short distance away, they saw the brown form of Golemar the dog, doubled and still. The driver motioned again, and they saw that he bent over the form of a man.

A moment and they had reached him, to stand waiting until he had crossed himself and whispered a prayer. Then Ed, taking his place by the side of the gasping, mutilated being on the ground, looked up inquiringly. An excited answer in French resulted, and the old sergeant turned to his corporal.

"A dud. Automobile came down the road and scared the horse. Started to run away. Just as the old man and the dog caught up with it over here in the high grass, the explosion happened. Guess the horse must have hit the shell with its hoof." Then, suddenly turning toward the injured poilu, he began to strip off his Marine Corps blouse.

"Shove out of yours, too, Mickey. Maybe we can frame up some kind of a stretcher out of 'em. Snap to it."

With that, his muscles set and he bent forward to stare in the direction of the dilapidated little stone house in the distance.

"There comes his kid. We've got to stop her before she sees him—this way! Mickey, head her off. She parlays English—the old man said so. Lead her away somewhere until we can get him in the house and fixed up a bit."

"*Petite Madeleine*—" It was a groaning voice from the ground. Ed caught his companion by the shoulders and started him forward.

"Hurry! She may hear him. He's coming to!"

Across the field went Mickey Brogan, to meet an anxious, white-faced little girl, and to smile down at her, as he led her away—to the other side of the house. There, with her in his arms, he told the story—that her father might never plow his fields again, that faithful old Limey was gone, and the dog, Golemar. There he felt the tears against his own cheek, as she sobbed and

prayed, felt the clutching of her little hands about his neck, felt the throbbing of a broken little heart beating against his breast; and his eyes closed, and the up-turned Irish lips trembled as he murmured over and over again:

"There, honey! Don't cry like that. Don't cry, honey—we'll help you, honest we will!"

"You'd better let me take her now, Mickey," sounded a soft voice at his side. "He's calling for her."

MICKEY looked up with the anguish of a new love in his faithful eyes. Quietly Delaney pointed to the house and shook his head. Mickey Brogan caught the meaning and tenderly he gave the sobbing child into the arms of the sergeant. Then, for a long, long time he sat there, staring out into nothingness, his hands clasped tight, his lips drawn and white. And it was there that Ed Delaney found him, just as the shadows were beginning to blot out the scraggly branches of Belleau Wood and heal with their softness the foreboding scars of their days of death. Quietly the old Marine bent beside his corporal, and placed an arm about his shoulders.

"Du Clait's gone."

Mickey winced.

"I'm—I'm sorry. It's tough on the kid, Ed."

"Yeh. I was glad you weren't there, Mickey. He was delirious. Kept talking

about us—the Marines—and how we'd help him when he took her to America."

"Aint that her crying now?" Mickey turned at a sound from within the house.

"Yes. I don't know what we're going to do about her. From all I can get, there aint any relatives or—or anything. It looks like an asylum—"

"That wouldn't be right, Ed."

"It don't seem so."

THEN for a long time they were wordless, the arm of the sergeant still clasped about the little corporal's shoulders. Across the fields the shielding dusk painted out the last of the ugly, torn branches of Belleau Wood. Above the hills a star appeared, bright and gleaming, the first star of evening. A night-bird circled low and called weirdly. Mickey Brogan stirred.

"It'd cost a lot, Ed," came huskily.

The arm tightened.

"I know, Mickey. But we'd be getting three hundred a month apiece. That's a good deal. We could do a lot with that."

"Sure. And—and besides, we'd have something to live for."

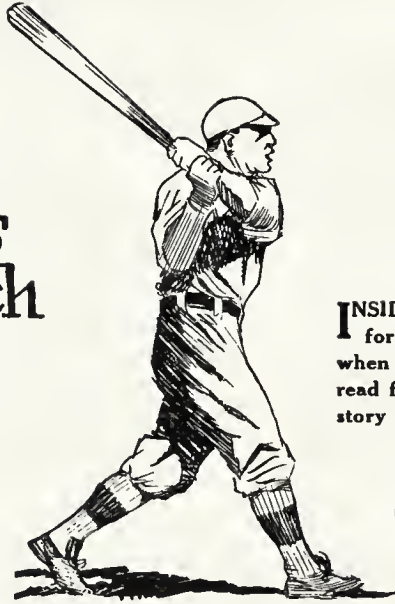
"That's right, Mickey."

From behind them came the sound of a child's voice, sobbing again in a fresh hysteria of grief. For just a second the arm of the older Marine clutched more tightly than ever about the shoulders of the smaller man. Then silently they rose and went within.

"ASHES OF DREAMS"

LEMUEL LAWRENCE DE BRA, author of that well remembered **BLUE BOOK** success "Tears of the Poppy," has written a new novelette that is in a sense a sequel to the former story. Like "Tears of the Poppy," it is a story of San Francisco's underworld and Chinese quarter—perhaps the most picturesque localities in America. Like the previous novelette also, "Ashes of Dreams" is breath-takingly swift in action, with constant surprises and a wonderfully colorful background. Don't miss this exceptionally engaging story; it will appear, along with many other good things, in the next, the May, issue of **THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE**.

Brains Versus Punch



INSIDE ball may be all right for the big-leaguers, but when out in the bushes—well, read for yourself this graphic story of frenzied baseball—

By
Ray Wynn

YES, I've heard all about this inside stuff in baseball, and I guess it's all right—sometimes. But take it from me, it doesn't always work out just as the deep thinkers figure. There are times and places where all the dope gets upset.

Take our old Undine team, for instance. There was a team made up of some of the employees of the Undine Worsted Mills at Clarkesville and a member of the eight-club Indian River Valley League. Yes, it was a bush league, all right; but we had some players in it that the big clubs would have been mighty glad to get, and that would 've plugged some mighty bad leaks in the organizations doing the "big time."

There was Scrapy McGowan, our second baseman, for instance. I don't know just how many scouts had journeyed to Clarkesville to give him the once-over, or how many offers they had made him—some of 'em mighty attractive ones. Jiggs Clements, our first baseman, was another man who looked sweet to the scouts. Both of 'em were .400 hitters in our league, and nothing too hard or far away for 'em to go after—and they usually got what they went after, too. They were no Ty Cobbs on the baselines; but then, they didn't need to be—a man don't need much speed to circle the bases after the ball is over the fence or buried away down in center-field

corner with the fielder wearin' out good shoe-leather chasin' after it. Tubby Ellis, Bill Wheaton and Ernie Glass, our catcher, shortstop and center-fielder, had also attracted attention.

Perhaps you wonder why some of 'em hadn't fallen for the offers made them and gone on the big time. Well, it wasn't so strange, after all. Every one of 'em were men who held down good jobs in the mills, and all of 'em were married and had families. The ball-club was run on the coöperative system. With what they made in the mills, plus their share of the profits of the ball-club, they figured they were just about as well off right where they were as they would be on the big time. It seems to me as though they were pretty near right, at that. Travelin' aint what it's cracked up to be—ask any man that's been way up front for a few years, if you don't believe me. His answer may enlighten you a little.

The league had been in existence five years and was going good. There wasn't a team in it that wasn't a paying proposition, even the tail-enders. Why? They were made up of local boys, and the people of the various towns took a personal interest in them. Personal interest is a great thing to draw crowds. Then too, the tariff wasn't steep; we didn't try to charge a dollar a head for fifty-cent baseball.

In the five years the Undines had landed three pennants and been second twice. We didn't do so well until we got hold of Tubby Ellis to hold Ed Watson and Charley Holke, our two leading twirlers. Once we got him, we were fixed for business—the fans used to say he could hold a cannon-ball if it came at him right. Our greatest rivals were the Unionville Crescents; they were the fellows who took the flag the first two years. The races had been just close enough to lend color and substance to their claim that next season they would tie up the flag-holding business at three apiece. There was nothing certain when the Undines and the Crescents met.

So there we were—all set for the beginnin' of the sixth season, when the things that I'm goin' to tell you about began to happen.

WE generally started our season in the middle of May; and openin' day was about a week off when Bruce Mallory came home from college, where he'd spent five years, havin' taken a postgraduate course in chemistry. Of course, we all knew Bruce—he was one of the town boys and the only son of old man Henry Mallory, owner of the Undine Worsted Mills. Before he went away to college, Bruce was a nice kid—quiet, easy-spoken, with a good word for everybody. He came back much the same, so far as his ways went.

But he brought somethin' back with him that he hadn't taken away. While he was at college, he played baseball, and made the varsity team in his second year. For the last four years at college he was a regular, and captain in his senior year. Accordin' to rumor in college circles, he'd developed into a star, and one of the greatest "inside-ball" players of recent years.

His success as a ball-player came as somewhat of a surprise to us at home. With us he had been rated as a fair, average ball-player—quick on the bases, a fair fielder and hitter, but nothin' so very remarkable. We could tell from old man Mallory's talk that he was as proud as a pup with two tails of the way Bruce was gettin' on in baseball. The old man was a dyed-in-the-wool "bug" if there ever was one; but none of us looked for what was comin' our way.

It happened at the last business meetin' of the club before the openin' of the season. Old man Mallory, as president of the club, was presidin'.

"There is one thing to which I would like to call the club's attention," he said. "The club has never had a bench-manager. Every other club in the league has one. Mr. McGowan, who has been acting as playing manager since the league was started, has done well. I have no desire to criticize his work in the position. But it seems to me that, with the season now before us,—the season in which the Unionville Crescents expect to tie up the pennants-won race,—a bench-manager is needed. I shall be glad to hear the opinions of others upon this point."

When it comes to diplomacy, the old man was there. You will notice that he had only expressed an opinion—made a suggestion. McGowan was the first to respond. The manager's job had never appealed to him; he didn't write a very good hand.

"So far as I'm concerned, it sounds good to me," he announced. "As you say, all the other clubs have 'em. We might just as well get into line. So far as the pennant business is concerned, it makes no difference. We'll be two pennants ahead, instead of one, at the close of the season—bench-manager or no bench-manager."

Several others expressed themselves in favor of having a bench-manager. I was one of 'em. If I'd known what was comin' to us later, I'd have bitten my tongue off first—and so, I think, would the rest that spoke. But we mortals are a blind lot—that is, most of us are.

"If some one of you will make a motion to that effect—" suggested old man Mallory.

The motion was made and seconded, put to a vote and carried.

"Ready for nominations," said the old man; but no one seemed to have any one in mind. You see, outside of the old man, all of those present were players. We looked at each other for a minute or two. I don't know how it was with the rest of 'em, but no name occurred to me.

"Since none of you seem to have any one in view," said the old man at last, "I would suggest my son for the position."

We rose to the bait. Some one nominated Bruce, and some one else—I'm not sure that it wasn't me—seconded the nomination. Bruce was elected unanimously. It was very plain to be seen that Mallory was immensely pleased.

"Very well, gentlemen," he said. "I presume that the new manager will issue a call

for you to meet with him before the season opens. A motion to adjourn the meeting is now in order."

BRUCE MALLORY issued a call for the meeting a few nights later at his home. We were all present. He treated us like kings—gave us a good supper. Then, after the meal was over, he led us into the library, and, when we had smoked up, he began:

"I have watched the Undines with much interest ever since the league was organized. We have a good team here—the best in the league, I think. But I think that we can make it even better—practically unbeatable, in fact—if we will use a little more science in playing our games—if we will use a little more baseball brains, instead of relying almost entirely upon punch, as we have done heretofore." He paused to let what he had said sink in. McGowan was the first to speak.

"I don't quite get you," he said briefly.

Bruce smiled. "I'll try to make myself clear to you. Most of the Undines' games have been won by pounding the ball. Every man who goes to bat tries to knock the cover off the pill. In several games that I have seen you play in recent years, this course has led to defeat. If—"

"I thought that, when a man went to bat, he was supposed to hit the ball," interrupted McGowan.

"He is, but not to try to knock it out of the lot. Of course, with one or two out and the bases full, there is just one thing to do. But suppose that there are none out, or one out, and the batter ahead of you is on first base; you should sacrifice, thereby advancing him a base. Then it is up to the next man to bring him home with a single."

McGowan was staggered for a minute.

"But suppose that I whale out a two-bagger, or a three-bagger? Wont he get home just the same, without another man down?"

Again Bruce smiled. "If you do, he will. But the chances are against your doing it."

"I'm not so sure of that. If you'll look up last season's averages, you'll find that I averaged three and a fraction extra-base hits a game. It seems to me that I'd be foolish to ground out or fly out, when I can just as well hit safe."

THEN the discussion became general. After we'd had quite a little of it, Bruce gave up for the time the idea of getting

McGowan to see it as he did and took another tack. He was good-natured about it, too. As we found out later, he had another card up his sleeve.

"We're not getting anywhere with this talk, are we?" he said pleasantly enough. "Suppose we try something else? I suppose that you-all know what the break in a game is?"

"Sure," said McGowan. "If there is to be any, it generally comes when Ellie and Clements are on the bases and I'm up to bat."

Conceited? Not a bit of it. Is a man conceited for statin' absolute facts? I couldn't begin to tell you how many times since the Undines had been organized, that just that very thing had happened. It was just like that Barry to Collins to McInnis stuff that we're all so familiar with. McGowan was certainly one of the greatest little game-picklers that I've ever seen.

Bruce Mallory gave up on that tack too. You see, he still had his other trump to play. And now he played it.

"Of course, you understand that from now on the team-play will be directed from the bench?" he asked. "The manager will give his orders, and the players will obey them?"

We agreed to that. What was the use of having a manager, if he didn't direct the playing of the team? Then, after a lot more of casual talk, the meetin' broke up.

McGowan and I walked home together. He was shakin' his head when we left the house. He was still shakin' it when we had walked six blocks. But never a word did he say until we were about to part in front of my house.

"D'ye get that bird?" he asked then. "I don't."

"I think I do. He wants to play inside ball."

McGowan grunted.

"He wants us to use our heads a little more," I went on. "You've read all about inside stuff in the papers. Baseball, as they play it in the big leagues and at the colleges, is a scientific game—it isn't all just chance. If a team can get a run an inning, playin' scientific ball, that's enough to win nine out of ten games." I was quotin' from an article I'd read some weeks before, and that came back to me as I stood there.

McGowan grunted again.

"Seems to me that the way that's been good enough to win three flags for us is

good enough to stick to, unless the other fellows get this scientific bug," he remarked. "And I haven't seen any signs of it's bein' catchin' among 'em."

I agreed with him. "Still, if we can work it, it makes it that much easier for us," I reminded him. "We can give it the once-over, anyway."

"I suppose so," he growled. "But I'm tellin' you, Johnson, we'll be glad to get back to the old way before we're done with it. Good night."

OUR first game was on the home grounds, with St. Clair. They were a good team, but had never run better than fourth in the race and had always been easy pickin' for us, either at home or abroad. Watson was pitchin' for us, and he was in good trim. They went down in one-two-three order in the first innin'. Then we came up to bat.

Wheaton was our first man up. He was small and a good waiter, with a tantalizin' way of hangin' his elbows over the plate and forcin' the pitcher to put 'em under or else hit him. He'd stand there, too, and let 'em hit, if they came his way. He walked. Ellis, the next man up, waited two balls for him to steal. He went down on the second one and was thrown out; St. Clair's catcher had a good arm and made a pretty peg to second. Then Ellis hit the third one through short. That brought Clements up.

Up to this time Bruce Mallory had sat on the bench without sayin' a word. But now he got up and went over to Clements.

"Sacrifice Ellis down to second," he ordered.

Clements looked at him a few seconds—then nodded his head. The same thing was passin' through his mind that was passin' through mine. Ellis was just about the last man on the team who was likely to score from second on a single. His hittin' and catchin' just about let him out. He was no speed-merchant on the bases. It was an open question whether, on an in-field hit, he could make second in time to save him from bein' the first victim in a double-play.

That was just what happened. Clements did his best to get the ball to one of the outfielders, but the best that he could do was a slow roller down the third-base line. Wyckoff of St. Clair was right on it and whiffed it to second. He caught Ellis by yards. It was closer at first, but the ball

beat Clements by a fraction of a second. I heard McGowan mentionin' somethin' about inside ball as he walked out to second, and the word before it sounded like "damn" to me.

JUST three St. Clair men faced Watson in the second innin'. Two out at first, and a strike-out, was the tally. McGowan grinned at me as he sorted out his favorite bat from the pile.

"No inside stuff this time," he said. "Just watch me pickle the old pill."

Nichols was pitchin' for St. Clair. He looked nervous when he saw McGowan toin' the plate. He had a right to. Nichols was a mighty good pitcher as pitchers go, but McGowan was the only man in the league that he was afraid of. And at that, he had lots of company. There wasn't a man that lined 'em over for any of the clubs that felt sure of himself when McGowan was up. McGowan grinned at him.

"Put 'er over, Sid, old boy," he invited. "I'll show you how to ride 'er out of the lot."

Nichols grinned—it was a feeble sort of grin, too—and uncorked a high, fast one well inside of the plate. McGowan leaned back and watched it go by while the umpire called it a ball. Nichols let him have another high one—another ball. And a third! Three balls and no strikes. And now McGowan grinned. He had Nichols in a hole, where he either had to put it over or walk him.

Nichols considered for a minute. Something seemed to tell him that he'd better make it a wide one and give Mac a pass, but he hated to give up. His catcher signed him to make it wide, and even stepped out to take the throw, but Nichols shook his head. He told me, long afterwards, that it had suddenly occurred to him to "cross" Mac by giving him one just where he liked 'em—waist-high and over the plate. The catcher stepped in behind the plate again, and then Nichols beckoned to him. They had a little confab, and the catcher came back and stood wide. It sure looked like a throw-out and a walk for Mac, and I think it fooled everyone else on the grounds but Mac.

The ball came sizzlin' in, waist-high and right over the plate, without any curve on it. Mac hadn't moved, except to draw back his bat as Nichols brought his arm forward for the throw. There was a crack,

and the ball shot out between first and second, risin' all the time, and cleared the fence. Mac looked as solemn as a parson as he dog-trotted around the bases.

The end of the innin' found us one run to the good. Glass and Steelman went out by the same route—third to first. Vantyne got first on a fumbled grounder which the St. Clair shortstop didn't recover in time to get him; but I wound up the innin' by flyin' out to left field.

It was the same old story for both teams in the third, three men facing the pitcher. With two down, one of the St. Clair men got on in the fourth, but the next man died at first.

Clements was the first of our men up in our half of the fourth. He singled. That brought Mac up.

"Sacrifice," was Bruce Mallory's order. Mac looked as though somebody had just offered him a dose of castor-oil; but he went up to the plate and laid down a neat grounder, just inside the line to first. He was out by a mile, but Clements made second. I was coachin' at first, and Mac's face was a study as he passed me on his way to the dugout.

"Could just as well made it a single," he growled. "Clem would been on third, then."

"Don't take it so much to heart," I told him.

"I hate to see perfectly good runs thrown away. Bet you a cigar that Clem don't score!"

"You're on."

Clements didn't score. The best that Glass could do was a pop fly, and Steelman lined one straight into the center-fielder's hands for the third out. Clements never got beyond second.

SO it went all through the game. Every time we got a man on first with none out, or one out, the order was to sacrifice. And not once did it get us anything. Of course, we had the one run that Mac had handed us, and, as St. Clair didn't get a man across the plate, that was enough to win. But Mac was sore as a boil on the way home.

"I can see our finish, if this sort o' thing is kept up," he told me. "We've always had a margin of three or four runs, at least, on St. Clair, and they haven't improved a bit since last year. They're tail-enders. Just wait till we stack up against some o' the teams that are in the runnin'."

"Mebbe by that time we'll have things different," I consoled him. "Mebbe Bruce'll see that it's not workin' right and change off to somethin' else." But, way down in my heart, I had a feelin' that this wouldn't be the case. Bruce Mallory had seen the thing work out all right at college—he'd played it for four years, and last, but far from least, he had an awful square jaw—the jaw of a man that isn't easily turned aside from his ways, even if he is wrong. Those fellows with the square jaws take an awful lot of showin' and persuadin'.

Our next game was with Bridgeton—another tail-ender. Bruce kept up his tactics, and again we barely won out, the inside-ball business nettin' us one run, and McGowan handin' us another with a home run one time when he came up first to bat.

And so it went. It was a lucky thing for us that the schedule was so arranged that we met the tail-enders and mid-league teams before we stacked up against the Crescents. We didn't lose a game, but our biggest margin was two runs, against Bridgeton. By the time we had played four games, the papers had begun to sit up and take notice, and the reporters had started a guessin' contest as to what it was that had caused our slump. One paper even printed a table of comparative scores made by the Undines and the Crescents; and let me tell you that table didn't make things look very bright for us. Of course, I understand, just as well as you do, that the mere fact of their beating the same teams that we had played by bigger scores was no argument that they would beat us; but such comparisons look bad to the fans. For the first time since the league had been formed you could go around the town to the places where the fans hung out and sense a feelin' of doubt as to the Undines' winnin' the flag that year. And in time this affected some of the players too. Fellows like Wheaton and Glass—just bunches of nerves—began to get unsteady in their play and fell off in their hittin'. If you'd gone to 'em and told 'em so, they'd most likely have tried to put the raz on you; but it was so, just the same.

The new system also had an effect upon the other teams which wasn't good for us. How? Suppose you were a pitcher on one of the other teams. When you noticed that a man like McGowan, who had hit you

right along last year for two or three or four extra base-hits a game, was only hittin' you for one, wouldn't you figure that either he was goin' back, or that you were gettin' better? And wouldn't that give you a lot more confidence the next time you faced him? Sure it would, and sure it did hearten up those fellows. I used to get around a little those days; and one night, over at Uniontown, one of their players asked me if I didn't think Mac was fallin'. I asked him why he thought so, and he said that he seemed to be fallin' off in his hittin'. Said that the Uniontown pitcher had noticed it too.

THAT brings us down to the first game with the Crescents. It was played on our grounds, and they came over loaded for bear. They were just brimmin' over with confidence, and the bunch of fans they brought with 'em were just as confident as the players.

Their confidence was well-founded, as things turned out. It was a whale of a game—went fourteen innin's; but they went home with 'the good end of a one-to-nothing score. Several times durin' the game McGowan, Clements and Ellis came up to bat with men on the bases ahead of 'em, and a most willin' disposition to clout the ball out o' the lot; but Bruce Mallory stuck to his inside-ball theory and ordered 'em to sacrifice. I'm sayin' somethin' in their favor when I tell you that they obeyed orders to the letter.

Me and McGowan were pretty thick in those days—are yet, for that matter. So I wasn't greatly surprised when I saw him turnin' in our front gate after supper. I knew he felt that he just had to talk it over with somebody. I felt the same way myself, and was just about to start out to hunt him up.

"Well, we made the Crescents a nice present today," he began. "Gave 'em the edge in the race and no end of confidence for the next tussle we have with 'em."

"It's too bad," I tried to soothe him. "Better luck next time." But he didn't soothe worth a cent.

"It is too bad when we hand 'em a game, just for the sake o' tryin' out a young cub's pet theory," he growled. "Come on with me."

"Where are you goin'?" I asked.

"I'm goin' around to have it out with Bruce Mallory. It's about time somethin' was done."

I hung back at that. McGowan is no diplomat. If questions could be settled by catch-as-catch-can or rough-and-tumble rules, he'd be all right. But there's none of the silky-tongued stuff about him. He's the same in an argument that he is on a ball-field—a fighter.

"Don't you think you'd better wait till you cool off a little?"

"Not me. I want to get at him while I'm hot."

THAT settled it with me. I knew there was no use in arguin'. So I got my hat and went along, hopin' to act as peace-maker, if I didn't figure in any other capacity. My sympathies were with Mac, but I didn't think it a good time to stage a discussion between him and Bruce. I knew Mac was sore, and I felt pretty sure that Bruce had taken the defeat to heart. You see, it was a black eye for his pet theory, for the game had been played accordin' to his orders from the bench. Then, too, I've generally found that these post-mortems on lost games don't get you anything but hard feelin's.

We found Bruce sittin' on the porch with his dad. The old man looked as though he had just received news of the death of his dearest friend. He certainly took the defeat hard. Bruce seemed more cheerful. McGowan lost no time in gettin' down to cases.

"I've dropped around to see if there can't be a stop put to this poppycock business known as inside ball," he says, lookin' Bruce straight in the eye. "It seems to me that it's had a fair enough trial. It's been tried on every club in the league, and we're in second place, with a quarter of the season gone. It's not too late to mend matters if we make a change, right now."

Bruce Mallory flushed up, but he kept his temper. Some job, that, for Mac's manner was about as agreeable as that of a bulldog when he's sittin' under the tree waitin' for you to come down so that he can take another half yard or so out of your best Sunday breeches.

"The defeat today doesn't necessarily condemn my system, Mr. McGowan," he says quietly but very firmly. "No system will win always. Today the breaks were against us. With an even split of them in our favor, we would have won out."

"We didn't need the breaks," says McGowan. "We don't need the breaks with

any club in this league. All we need is a chance to hit the pill, instead of layin' it down for an out."

"I'm sorry I can't agree with you, Mr. McGowan." Bruce's tone was decidedly chilly. "I'm not alone in my stand, either," he added. "The best authorities on baseball are against you, as well."

Mac damned the best authorities on baseball both individually and generally. "I'm no highbrow," he goes on; "but I do know somethin' about baseball, and I do know about this team of ours. It's so made up that your pet scheme wont work with it, and the sooner you find that out and get back to some system that will work, the better it'll be for all concerned."

At that Bruce Mallory flared up.

"I'll continue to run the team my own way as long as I'm manager, Mr. McGowan. When I feel that I need your advice, I'll call for it. If you don't like the way I run the team, there is always one thing that you can do—you can quit."

McGowan never turned a hair at that. "Yes, I can quit," he says, very quietly—too quietly by far, for him. "I can quit—and I think that's what I'll do."

"That goes for me too," I butts in. I was as mad as McGowan by this time.

THEN old man Mallory gets into the game. He had sat quiet so far. He was a good listener.

"Just let me say a few words, boys. I'm interested in this team, quite as much as the rest of you." So he was, for he was the chief financial supporter of it and never took a cent of profit himself. "And if there is any more talk of quitting, I shall feel compelled to withdraw my support. You players elected Bruce manager of the team for this season by a fair and open vote. If I remember rightly, it was unanimous. His theory may be wrong—I don't admit for a moment that it is, for I don't consider that it has had a fair trial; but right or wrong, it is your duty to support him and to do as he says. If you do that and the Undines lose the flag, it is his fault, not yours. But if you are going to hinder and hamper him in every way possible, the fault is yours. I've always played fair with you men, and all that I now ask you to do is to play fair with my boy."

He had us. There never was a squarer man than old Henry Mallory, and both McGowan and I knew it. And McGowan was a square man himself, although rough

in his ways. For a full minute after Mallory quit talkin', everything was quiet. Then McGowan spoke.

"All right, boss," he says. "I'll stick till the last game. Good night. Come on, Johnson."

"I meant exactly what I said," he told me, after we had talked things over for an hour or two on our porch. "I'll stick till the last game—till it, you understand."

"No, I don't," I told him. And I didn't, either.

"You will, later," he yells back at me as he goes down the walk.

IT was luck as much as anything else that made possible what happened afterward. The Crescents took the next game from us, but we managed to get the third from them, thanks to two times that McGowan came to bat unhampered by orders to sacrifice. The first time, Wheaton was on third. He made a three-bagger, and then both Ellis and Clements went out on pop flies that held him there. McGowan was on third, himself, when they got the ball relayed back to the infield. The other time McGowan was the first man up, and some kid got admission to the grounds for huntin' up the ball and bringin' it to the gate. Those two lonely runs were enough, for the Crescents couldn't hit Holke.

The Crescents dropped another game too—to Bridgeton. Waldron, their star boxman, was a fine pitcher, but he got a little overconfident in that game and fooled with the Bridgeton batters—gave two of 'em bases on balls, hopin' to strike out Harris, the weakest hitter on the team. He had two strike-outs on Harris as it was. But the worm turned that time. Waldron always said that Harris shut his eyes and whaled at the ball. However he did it, it was a home run, with the two men on ahead of him, and the game ended with the Crescents on the short end of a three-to-two score. So that tied 'em up with the Undines in the race.

I was pretty close to Billy Hansen of the Clarksville *Sentinel* in those days; so it was no great trouble for me to keep posted on the battin'-averages of the team. Under Bruce Mallory's system, both McGowan and Clements fell from the .400 class to around .275, and Tubby Ellis dropped from around three hundred and a quarter to about .240; others on the team suffered too, although it didn't show up so plainly in their cases as it did with the

three I've mentioned. Hansen was dead set against Bruce's system.

"It's all right with nine teams out of ten, maybe, as Bruce claims," he said. "But this is the tenth team and the exception. I've told Bruce so, but he can't see it. He's bull-headed, all right—thinks just because it worked at college, it should work here."

THE last game of the season for both the Crescents and the Undines was scheduled for our grounds. We had the biggest turn-out ever known in the history of the league. They had ropes down the foul-lines and all around the field, and everything was jammed. We had a big grounds, but they had to have ground-rules—two bases on a hit into the crowd.

McGowan had a grin on his face that day—the first that I'd noticed in a long time. He'd played right along through the season, givin' the best that was in him and obeyin' orders to the letter; but I'd known, all along, that it was an effort for him and that his heart wasn't really in the game. Mine wasn't either, although I'd been very careful to say nothin' to any of the other men to cause dissatisfaction. We were standin' down near first base, watchin' Waldron warm up—he was one sweet pitcher when he was goin' right, and he certainly was in fine trim that day.

"You seem happy," I says to Mac.

"I am," he comes back at me. "Today's the day that Bruce Mallory's pet theory goes into the discard. It hasn't worked all season, and today I'm goin' to put the kibosh on it."

"I don't get you."

"You will, a little later on. Say, do you know what Hansen tells me? He says that two thirds of the games we've won have been won without usin' inside ball to win 'em. By sheer good luck we're tied up with this bunch here. Do you think I'm goin' to see the flag go to Unionville, just for the sake of upholdin' a worthless theory? Not me, kid!"

I glanced at Bruce, sittin' on the bench. He didn't seem at all worried. I give him credit for believin' all that he had told us in the dressin'-room a short hour before. Accordin' to him, all that we had to do was to obey his orders, and another flag would wave in Clarkesville. I'd had my doubts about this as I listened to him, but most of 'em vanished when I heard McGowan talk.

"Go to it, old man—I only hope you get the chance," I told him.

THE game was a heartbreaker. Waldron was good—he never pitched a better game; and Watson was just as good. It was up to the plate and back again for eleven of our men and ten of theirs in the first seven innin's. In that time we managed to get four men on first. They died there, just as did five of the Crescents.

The first damage was done in the eighth. Sears, the first man up for the Crescents, drove a hard one at Watson. Ed knocked it down with one hand and threw him out at first, but it had jarred him, and he wasn't as steady as he had been when Collins, the next batter, faced him. Collins saw this and waited him out. He walked—the first base on balls in the game. Then, just to show you how a theory will work in one case and not in another, the Crescents resorted to Bruce's pet scheme to get that run across.

Henry pushed a slow roller toward first. Watson got it and threw him out at first, but Collins made second. Collins overran second purposely and drew a hurried throw from Clements. The ball didn't hit fair in McGowan's glove and shot away back of second for a few yards. By the time that McGowan got it to Vantyne, Collins, who was a fast runner, was lyin' across the third bag, and the Crescent crowd were yellin' their heads off. It was a pretty piece of inside ball.

Then Cunningham did what was expected of him. He drove a single to left,—the first hit of the game,—and Collins crossed the plate with what looked to be the decidin' run. The crowd seemed to think so, and I know it looked that way to me, although Watson pulled himself together and struck out Brown, one of the heaviest and most dangerous hitters on the Crescent team.

There was a lot of noise as Wheaton went to the plate for us. Although it was only the endin' of the eighth, the head of the battin' order was up, and it was just about our last chance. Everybody felt it, too. If the head of the list couldn't do anything, it wasn't likely that the tail of it would.

I NEVER saw a man work harder to draw a base on balls than Wheaton did. As I've said, he was some little artist in that line, and now he used everything

he'd ever known. He kept movin' around with his elbows stuck out over the plate; he swung his bat back and forth; he kidded Waldron. And after he had drawn two balls and a strike, his efforts were rewarded. Waldron tried to sneak over a low, fast one on him, and he managed to get a leg in front of it. The Crescents' captain made a kick, but the umpire waved him away and sent Wheaton down to first.

ELLIS obeyed Bruce's order and waited two balls for Wheaton to steal; but Wheaton didn't dare try it. As it was, he was nearly caught off first by a peg from the catcher. Then Ellis tried to sacrifice and fouled two off for two strikes. Waldron finished the job with a high, fast one, and Tubby set sail for the dugout.

Clements was sent to the plate with orders to sacrifice. That he didn't like the orders was evident, but he obeyed them. He took a strike, then pushed one down toward third base. The Crescents' third baseman ran in on it, fumbled it for a second or two, and then turned and drove it toward second. Fast running and a long slide saved Wheaton. In the meantime Clements let out an extra link and made first in time to beat the relayed throw.

Then the Undine rooters rose to the occasion. One out, two on and McGowan at bat. It seemed like old times. They begged him to put it out of the lot, to hammer the cover off, to do all sorts of things. And Mac stood there, grinning wickedly at Bruce and swinging his bat in his right hand, waiting for Bruce's signal to him. He grinned some more when Bruce signaled to sacrifice. Then he walked up to the plate and took his stand.

Waldron looked him over carefully. As he stood there, it seemed to me that those two previous strike-outs on him didn't loom so large after all. It seemed to me that another McGowan stood there in place of the man I had watched obeying Bruce Mallory's orders all season. I think Waldron sensed something of the change in him too, for as he looked at him, a doubtful expression seemed to cross his face, and he shook his head as the catcher signaled to him. A moment later he nodded and began to wind up.

McGowan watched it go by,—a nice one, but a little wide,—and the umpire called it a ball. The next, a high one, he fouled. The third was a ball.

The fourth was the best ball that Waldron ever pitched—for us. It was high and well out from the plate, and Mac leaned on it. Right field was pretty deep on our grounds, but it cleared the fence with yards to spare. We thought the game would end then and there, as Mac slowly circled the bases; but after some little time we managed to get the crowd back within the ropes again.

Bruce Mallory was waitin' for Mac as he came in to the plate. His face was white as chalk, but his eyes were blazin'. I lounged nearer in case there should be any trouble, but there wasn't any need.

"Why didn't you obey orders?" grits Bruce as though he was chewin' ice. Mac looked at him a little before replyin'.

"Because we needed the runs to win the game," he says at last. Then he turns away toward the dugout and lifts his cap to the yellin' crowd.

The rest of the game? Oh, it was tame enough. Glass and Steelman went out, just as they'd been doin' all the game, and just as Mac had figured they'd do. Then Watson pulled himself together and retired the Crescents on eleven pitched balls—he wasted two on one man, sizin' him up.

Well, that's about all there is to it, except that McGowan and Bruce had a heart-to-heart talk that night at the Mallory house. Hansen was there, and so was I. Bruce was a little stiff at first. You see, he thought that McGowan had broken his word. But he hadn't. He'd promised to obey orders *till* the last game, and he did. Then, when Bruce had looked over the scores and averages that Hansen had brought with him and had seen for himself just how little inside ball had had to do with the winnin' of the pennant, he gave in, like the gentleman that he is. Did he manage the team again? Oh, yes, for several years. And on numerous occasions we were able to make good use of the inside stuff that he'd brought from college with him. But he'd admit to you right now that usin' your heavy hitters to sacrifice don't work well with the Undine team.



Adventure . .

IT lacked a half-hour of noon on sailing morning when the *Tonora*, a weary little, rusty little freighter wearing the golden triangle of the Arthur Steamship Line upon her skinny funnel, abruptly shifted her course—she was then bearing wide of Cape Hatteras—and aimed her battered nose at the generous mouth of Delaware Bay: a radiogram, backed by authority no lighter than that of the owner of the line, plucked her from the coastal lane which curved toward the Gulf of Mexico and dropped her down within hailing distance of old Fort Delaware.

Paying off the launch-owner who had been prevailed upon to bring her down the river from Philadelphia, Miss Julie Arthur climbed the sea-ladder into the midst of a wondering crew. The owner of the Arthur Steamship Company was a girl not far along in her twenties, with a firm little chin and round romantic dark eyes which peeped out with gravity under a brown toque charmingly appropriate.

Captain McKay welcomed his owner when she appeared at the ladder's top, in deference to the best deep-sea traditions, and smothered his perplexity behind a beamy, wrinkling grin. He relieved her of

two ancient, belabeled suitcases, and as it was not ethically proper to make pointed inquiries, merely asked if there was anybody else to come. On being assured that she was traveling alone, the Captain conducted her to a little stateroom with yellowed walls, smelling of recently applied paint, and illuminated by one pulsing electric bulb.

"You're probably devoured with curiosity," Miss Arthur said by way of preliminaries. "Well, I am dropping down to Mexico to look over the new oil-fields." She smiled. "Rainbow-chasing on the side!"

The Captain deposited the suitcases on the linoleum inside the wave-check, lowered his fists to his square hips and regarded her solemnly out of eyes as gray as fog. His untrained mustache began twirling. His face was square and fiery, with a bulblike, blue-lined nose. Little smile-wrinkles streamed out upon his skin from his chapped mouth, and worry-wrinkles streamed out from his eyes like the wakes of the torpedoes, real and imaginary, which had installed many of them there. Captain Angus McKay was, relatively, a newcomer to the Arthur fleet. He had had



A COMPLETE NOVEL-ETTE — a vivid and virile drama of the sea in which exciting events follow each other in swift and engrossing succession.

by

George Worts

three ships blown out from under him in the war—tiny cargo-boats like this one.

"You didn't stop my ship for that!" he deplored.

The girl shrugged. "Well, war's all over. My little bit is finished. They wouldn't let me across, and I'm dying for—change. I wanted a taste of salt air and the tropics. If excitement should happen to come my way, I wont sidestep—"

THE ultimate word was lost. Miss Arthur stopped to stare across the Captain's fat shoulders. A giant in grease-blackened overalls had bulged into the flood of yellow light which flowed from the stateroom doorway. The girl's smile was abandoned to strange confusion. The flame of amazing eyes was sweeping her face. They were blue, and such a blue! Smoldering heavens of South China before typhoons leap from the sky! Parapets of the Taj Mahal at sunrise!

She believed momentarily that the alarm was mutual, and beheld that his lips were thin and dry but brightly red. His skin was the tint of a used saddle—bronzed and seasoned. Her own eyes commenced to swim. Why, the man was colossal!

He swung out of the lighted zone, a huge blot of opacity against the misty nimbus of the after lights, leaving in the girl's brain a sharp, displeasing impression. He had seemed not to look at her but through her and some few thousands of miles beyond! He almost took her breath away.

The weather-hardened voice of Captain McKay penetrated her confusion.

"A privileged character," he was murmuring apologetically. "That's Porlamar."

"The aviator?" she cried.

"They call him an ace," said the Captain. "Brought down twelve Germans, by official count, didn't he? Had more medals than you could hold in the palm of your hand. Threw them overboard!"

"Mercy! What is he doing on this ship?"

Captain McKay's downward glance slid over hers uneasily.

"Well—I'm letting the lad work his way south. He's oiling. I know that sort of thing is contrary to the general manager's orders, Miss Arthur—"

"Oh, it's perfectly all right," she assured him. "Give a lift to a man in uni-

form whenever you can. Where is Porlamar going?"

"He was prospecting for gold on the Rio Mangualile, in Honduras, with his pardner when the war broke out. He's going back, he says.

"One of the men who came over on the ship with him told me he went up after Baron von Richthofen, of the Red Circus, the day the German ace was winged. I guess nobody knows for sure; probably never will. Porlamar doesn't know himself, or keeps mum for private reasons. He wont talk about himself; never would. Well, he admits they brought him down in flames. That was a brand-new crop of lashes and brows you were looking at. It was a close shave. Doesn't like to talk about it. Always *was* queer that way. Oh, I've known Porlamar since the lad was knee-high to a cormorant!"

"When does he come off watch?"

The Captain grinned. "Eight bells, but he comes on deck for air on the average of once every nine minutes. Restless as a cat. We let him have his own way. He's earned it. Porlamar's had an amazing career. If you want to talk to a man who's had *real* adventures, just talk to Porlamar."

"I intend to," said Miss Arthur.

"Have to go above now, till we're clear of Cape May. I'll be there till two or three, if you happen to be a night-owl. If Porlamar wont talk about himself—I will!"

"I'll come up," Miss Arthur promised.

CHAPTER II

A WARM wind, sweet with the odor of salt mist, was hastening up Delaware Bay from the ocean. Julie Arthur on her way aft heard the metallic thunder of home-coming anchor-chain, the mellow warning of a bell 'tween-decks, the enthusiastic churning of a noisy, loose-sounding engine.

The giant in overalls was leaning with elbows upon the rail looking down at the soapy welter reaching outward from the stern when Miss Arthur reached the fan-tail.

"Lieutenant Porlamar?"

As the aviator turned, the light on the cabin wall moved over his face, and Julie Arthur believed she caught a glimpse of a faint shiny red area, with his nose at the

center; and she wondered if that might not be a souvenir of his flaming descent from the sky.

She wondered what the deep furrows carved downward on either side of his nose indicated. They were like old cutlass-scars. His black hair was wirelike. There was a tragic something contained in that strong, hardened face, it seemed to the girl.

"You're Miss Arthur?" he rejoined in a ready voice that was deep and calm—even indifferent.

LIEUTENANT PORLAMAR of the Royal Flying Corps was prepared to show none of the servility characteristic of her crews. It seemed to her, however, that his attitude partook unnecessarily of the opposite extreme. The seemingly studied indolence of his bearing gave to her interest a shade of exasperation; the cruelty expressed by the hard, sharp lines alongside his nose (if the quality so expressed happened to be that of cruelty) fired her curiosity. Never had she gazed upon hands so smoothly dark and solid. How pale and small the sunburnt Captain became at his measure!

"You don't have to go back to the engine-room at once," she said, half in question, half in command. "I'd like to talk to you."

"No, not at once," replied the giant gravely, with rising inflection.

He drew two chairs together toward the rail. A spot of red light burning at the knuckle of one brown hand she momentarily mistook for a cigar or cigarette. When she looked closer, the spot mystified her by radiating electric purple, next, a fiery swimming orange. The fire-stone blurred and simmered like the eye of a snake concealed in undergrowth. It danced upward. The gem was fixed in a crude ring of hammered gold on the man's little finger.

He extracted from a box a long curved cigar. It was as black as licorice, as thin as a pencil. A lighted match came forth. Igniting the *cigarro*, he horrified his companion by squashing the match-flame deliberately between a thumb and forefinger; he then flicked the charred splinter overboard.

"Have you a passport?" she asked, sighing.

"Well, you can always swim ashore at night," he said seriously.

SHE wondered if the man's grimness was temperamental or merely the outward sign of his displeasure at her taking advantage.

"Is it really as uncivilized as that?"

"It's somewhat irregular." He dropped his cigar hand to his uppermost knee, settled back in his chair, and in an easier, lighter voice, as if he had decided to relent, added: "Suppose I oughtn't to be going back. Plenty for a man to do where it's civilized. Matter of fact, I don't know what to do with myself in civilization."

"No more wars," Julie supplied.

"Pardner's dead," he amended.

She waited silently. Then:

"What do you do down there?"

"Live. That's about all."

"Oh!" Julie breathed. "Is it exciting?"

"That all depends. There are bandits. And it's beautiful. One of the most wonderful spots on earth." Porlamar seemed to retire into his shell at that.

"I might pay you a visit sometime," she said with a smile. "Are there accommodations for guests?"

"Accommodations for a million guests. The mountains are roomy places!"

"Why! You have a sense of humor!"

A rumble rewarded her. "Would I be going back—running away—if I had, Miss Arthur?"

"Don't you care—" she began.

"I like the open," he said quietly. "I want to be free."

His face looked deathless, like that of a bronze Buddha. Twelve German planes, officially! Hadn't enough adventure been crowded into those aerial hours to quench any wanderlust? Or had the ultimate of his romantic longings evaded him in the clouds?

She pictured him readily—diving down from the sun to pounce upon a shimmering dragonfly, spitting phosphorized bullets as he fell. She pictured the flashing of his white teeth as he plunged down, the outward thrust of his heavy jaw, the brilliance of triumph in his blue eyes, as he looped or *vrilled*, and watched the dragonfly go wabbling and tumbling under a pillar of reddened black soot to destruction!

"I'm tired," he said, so promptly that she imagined he had been tracing her thoughts.

"So am I," said the girl in a faint voice, lacing her white fingers over one knee.

"What's the matter with what you've got?" he said with surprise.

Julie brushed the Arthur Steamship Company and its Mexican oil-holdings out of her existence with a scornful toss of her little head. "Women are more restless than men. Listen: how long did you live in that place before you went to war? Where were you before that?"

"Bob—my pardner—and I came over to Honduras in a sloop from Rarotonga. We had bad luck. Expected to strike better. We were there not quite a year—nine months or so before war began."

"Did he go to war too?"

"Killed—gassed."

JULIE lowered her glance. "Were you—happy there before?"

"Do selfish people ever find happiness?" he exclaimed, and subsided. "Well, it is beautiful—that is, if you honestly care for raw scenery. We didn't penetrate very far—too busy making preparations. There's a mine of opals in those hills somewhere. Nothing to lose by looking. Both of us were familiar with the geology of mineral country—thought we'd take a look-see. There *is* an opal mine near Cape Gracias a Dios."

Porlamar slipped the ring from his finger and dropped it into her nearer hand.

"Found that one and its mate when I was panning alone, waiting for Bob to come back with tools from Puerto Cartes. He came back with the news that the war was on. We had them mounted in Paris—in gold we took out of the river."

Julie tried the ring on the middle finger of her left hand; it changed the character of her hand into that of a villainess!

"Bad luck!" she murmured.

"Well, he died wearing his," Porlamar added in a curious voice. "The lost mine in the valley of blue fire was all we talked about before he joined the Legion. We expected to come back in six months—war wasn't going to last a *year* then!"

"Are you sure the mine really exists?"

"We thought so. Probably didn't care much. The fun was in looking. It's a wonderful place to go looking for anything. Such colors in the rocks and sand—blues and reds and yellows! Nature seems to take care of all your moods down there, all at once! You have to use your imagination, I mean.

"There's one cañon, a broad, deep furrow of black and red rock—blood color! Lord! A detestable place, full of sharp edges and ribs.

"Then about halfway up the river we found a cavern, running up under a ledge of red porphyry—white as a dove! Good place to camp. Beyond that is one of the Cordillera peaks. We climbed that for a sunrise. When the sun came up, the whole world boiled over—finest kind of gold!"

Julie sighed prodigiously. "You've forgotten the blue valley. Is it a mirage? Volcanic fire?"

Porlamar's expression was obscure. "Oh, the color's there. A kind of blue light—rich and warm—after sundown. We chased mirages!"

An air of dissatisfaction settled about the girl's pretty mouth. "Isn't your wanderlust almost satisfied? It ought to be."

"Yes, it ought to be," he conceded. "But there's always bigger excitement just around the next bend in the road, you know."

"Any man who went to France," Julie dissented, "found the greatest adventure he'll ever find!"

Porlamar hesitated. "I didn't," he said impulsively. "But I'll admit I've seen men who have!"

"How could you tell?" Julie exclaimed incredulously.

He gave her an unblinking stare. "By the expression in their faces when we gathered them up! God! Their faces were happy! Surprised! Unless you've seen a dead man on a battlefield, you can't imagine. Well, they were in luck!"

"Don't—don't say any more!" Julie cried in alarm and repugnance. Her body was stiff. "Think of what they gave up!" she said furiously. "Future! Friends! Poor boys—stepping over a cliff into—blackness!"

"That wasn't the impression I got," Porlamar murmured slowly.

CHAPTER III

JULIE pressed her flaming cheeks into icy palms. Her temples were bursting. She was flooded with a feeling of incompetency. It was as if this healthy, powerful man at her side had threatened to end his life deliberately!

She dropped her hands limp upon her lap. The aviator fetched a tired groan and slowly got up. With both hands he smoothed his cheeks and chin. He started to leave.

"Where are you going?" she faltered.

His hand was on one of the knobs of her chair-back. "You've been mighty considerate to a lonely duffer," he said in an unsteady voice. "*Adiós—querida!*"

"Oh!" Julie cried.

That seemed to be all. She heard the firm tap of his heels on the deck behind her as he retreated. She sank back, dropped her folded hands between her knees and squeezed them until the knuckles cracked. Her shoulders were sagging. Her lips were joined in a white thread of bitterness. She felt cheated, humiliated, thrust aside. She had seldom been deprived of anything on which her heart was set, slightest of all the ardent admiration of a man. Yet she had left no more than a vanishing ripple upon the broad pond of the adventurer's experiences. She was like a colorless stitch in a cloth of vivid pattern—the incident of an unimportant evening!

"Why did you call me—'*querida*'?" she cried breathlessly.

Porlamar jerked himself around, and the spark of his cigar described an exquisite ruby parabola in its startled flight over the rail. His shoulders lifted and fell under a repressed explosion.

"Only because I meant that," he said heavily.

"If you've fallen in love with me," she panted, "then why are you running away?"

"Best for you and best for me."

"Listen! That isn't true! You're unfair! You're wasting capability, too, going to that place!"

"Good God—for what?" he grunted.

"Work! Reconstruction!" The girl's voice was trembling with eagerness. "They need your kind everywhere! If you're worrying about a position, or money—I'm arranging now to sell these boats. I'll be free! I'll have plenty! We can—"

The iron arm wrenched itself away. He was standing over her; and his face was ashen.

"This has got to stop—here," he said, "and now. I can't be fair with you any other way. We must not see each other again. I'll never forget you—or—tonight—*querida!*"

The engine-room door closed silently behind him.

JULIE hastened to her room and started unpacking, arranging articles for her comfort excitedly but in a manner that be-

spoke familiarity with sea-voyages. She endeavored simultaneously to arrange her tumbling thoughts as nicely, trying to smother her burning nervousness. But the mirror over the porcelain washbowl insisted upon giving back to her a pair of blushing cheeks and a pair of brown eyes which glittered wickedly.

She was, despite her mental confusion, polishing a plan to seize Porlamar the instant he came off watch. The scheme in full detail had been born in her brain when he shut the door behind him. It would be laborious and painful trying to convince him that she was willing to throw pride and modesty to the winds, to make him understand that she was not madly in love with him.

That wasn't it. She was madly in love with no one. Was his mind decent enough and broad enough to grasp that? She wondered if he would be furious, or indignant, or contemptuous, or scornful, or merely indifferent. Or would he presume? She shuddered at that. Or would he understand perfectly? Here she smiled. Would he be considerate and manly, would he comprehend how tired she had grown of the monotony of existing behind a thousand-foot fence; that she craved change, excitement, novelty; and that he, unfortunately perhaps, appeared to be the only medium available through which these desirable things could be obtained?

She paused in her task to listen. This was her first trip on the *Tonora*; and in all of her polite globe-trotting Julie was sure she had never before put to sea in a ship so fruitful of queer and alarming groans and sobs as was this ancient fabric. Every heart-throb of the engines met with a sympathetic squirm and sigh on the part of the corroded frame. Putting to sea in a rusted old merchantman filled with venerable secrets—the golden adventures of yesterday! Why, the voyage to Tampico was an adventure in itself!

Vivid gong-sounds clanged overhead. Eight bells! It was midnight. Porlamar would be coming up from the engine-room at any instant, and he would probably pace the deck. She felt sure of that. Slipping into her blue raincoat Julie started toward the after end.

With Delaware Bay at her flundering heels, the *Tonora* was driving now into choppy cross-seas, rising and plunging with the sluggishness native to small cargo-boats, deeply laden. Tall, dark waves

washed against the sides and tumbled shoreward. The funnel guy-wires were singing to the drain of a stiff wind, as steady as the current in a river. The lights of a passing ship twinkled with the isolated brilliance of tropical stars.

Her heart sank, was lifted and began palpitating madly as she approached the whaleboat near the door which opened upon the engine-room stairway. She was afraid—and waited, in the lee of the tarpaulined whaleboat.

THE murk of the deck, following the dancing glitter of lights on plunging steel, was probably what prevented Lieutenant Porlamar from seeing her at once. He let himself down into a canvas deck-chair, less than fifteen feet from the spot where Julie cleaved to the side of the small boat.

Julie crept toward him from behind, with her eyes fixed upon the unbrushed mass of wiry black hair, and the bronzed neck which rose up with defiant solidarity from the opened throat of the shirt.

He could not have heard her, for the wind and waves almost obliterated the threshing of the wheezy engine. Yet he turned, slowly, as if her very presence had aroused him.

As he sprang up Julie smiled a rather scared smile.

Under the near-by electric the blue of his eyes seemed to grow intenser as they narrowed. He seized her hand, crumpling it in hot, dry flesh, and clung to it, as if he were insecure.

"I thought we had decided—" he began harshly, dragging a chair alongside the other, facing the sea.

Julie sat down primly, considered the numerous evidences of his discomfort, and nursed the throbbing finger-tips. She was surprised and disappointed to find none of them bleeding, and observed thoughtlessly that the *Tonora* was starting to roll. Now that they were away from the lee of Cape May the sou'wester was freshening noticeably. Wind and waves were keyed to a higher vibration.

Lifting her chin, Julie began steadily: "I wanted to let you know what I've decided. Women generally chase men because they love or hate them enough to throw pride away. I'm doing it because the life you lead is the kind of life I've wanted for years to lead. I'm starving for it. And that's the whole truth, Porlamar!"

He seized her arm so tightly that she cried out.

"Absolutely unfair! *You* don't love me!"

"Of course I don't!"

"How can this thing work out?" He dropped her arm, stared moodily from her eyes to her parted lips.

Julie had been prepared for this, at least. "If you mean, you think I intend to flirt with you, and drop you when we reach Tampico, you're mistaken. Aren't you selfish too? Would you be running away, refusing to share yourself with anyone, if you were not?"

"I wont theorize," he said curtly. "Is my life my own? Is yours your own? As a matter of fact, your kind and my kind are not meant to mingle."

"Do you know what kind I am?" she retorted.

"A New York society girl. Used to getting everything you want. If you have any doubts about me, ask Angus McKay. Probably my best friend, but he'll go out of his way to tell you the truth."

"You're trying to frighten me," said Julie cannily. "It can't be done. Where are you going when we reach Tampico?"

"Honduras," he said immediately.

JULIE twisted nearer. "How do we get there? Charter a schooner?"

Porlamar began to laugh, watching her as expectantly as if she were some absurd character on a moving-picture screen.

"A girl has as much right to adventure as a man!" she said indignantly.

"Of course she has!"

"Then why are you laughing?"

He stopped. "What happens when we reach Honduras?"

"I should think after all you've been through you'd be broader-minded," Julie replied petulantly.

Porlamar was attending her with humility.

"I can ride a horse, shoot straight, cook good meals on an open fire. I'm healthy. And I know what hardship means."

"I wouldn't let you out of my sight an instant!" he came back at her reproachfully.

Julie settled back, briding. "Explain that."

"The Rio Manguale's a pretty rough place. Sometimes you meet a bad man. They aren't very courteous to pretty ladies—apt to be impulsive. They carry Luger

automatics, and they can hit a bat on the wing—"

Julie sniffed. "If you're not afraid of bandits, I'm not."

"Have to kill me first, wouldn't they?"

She considered this pensively. "But I don't want you to love me! That isn't my meaning—at *all!*"

Porlamar was laughing again, with his hands on his knees, his head thrown back, as if he were exhausted.

Disregarding him, Julie proceeded: "I intend proving to you that a girl and a man can have the same experiences, undergo the same hardships, with no more embarrassment than if they were two men."

Porlamar seemed to be giving this serious thought.

"Your theory is sound," he decided finally, "except for one trivial flaw."

Julie suspected irony, and waited.

"And that," he concluded, "is that you happened to be created in the form of a woman that men fall in love with very easily—recklessly—dangerously! Understand now?"

Julie tucked wisps of blowing hair under her brown toque with a disturbed hand, and momentarily devoted herself to the toes of her shoes.

"Did I make myself perfectly clear?" she answered.

"Perfectly!"

"Don't you believe that impersonal friendship between a man and a woman is possible?"

"No!"—emphatically. "Nobody does."

She was disappointed.

"Have you ever tried the experiment?"

"It isn't necessary."

"Because you're stubborn!"

"No; I'm trying hard to look at it your way," he said gravely. "You can't get away from first principles. To be cruel and *very* outspoken, Nature has provided for the world to be populated. The system has been in operation for millions of years. I don't see exactly how your theory makes room for that law. But maybe you *have* made provision for that."

CHAPTER IV

JULIE was blushing, but she plunged on:

"I insist that a man and a woman can be pals—impersonal friends. If they want to fall in love, get married, have children,

—as lots of them will,—that answers your question.

“My theory is that if men and women stop looking upon one another as possible husbands and wives, they would become better friends. There would be less restraint in conversation—we wouldn’t be ashamed to come right out and talk about the things which ought to be talked about. The social system, as it applies to boys and girls when they grow up, is wrong. I am going to prove it!”

“With me?” he inquired skeptically.

Julie nodded firmly.

“In the first place,” he said, “there’s no possible chance of my falling out of love with you, no matter how hard we hammer on theory! In the second place, I just happen to be old-fashioned enough to *believe* in the present social system—the one we’ve managed to struggle along with for a few million years—as it applies to grown-up girls and boys.”

“Why?” she cried impatiently.

“Because it keeps the world on an even keel.”

“You’re positively conventional!”

“And unreasonable, and set in my ways, and stubborn. It’s criminal nowadays to be conventional,” he added dryly.

“It’s worse! It’s blindness! Wont you realize that the past four years have freed women and men of the silly old constraint? Or must that idiotic thousand-foot fence always stand there?”

“I know a girl,” she went on, “one of my best friends, who has never had anything, *anything*. Always giving in to her family. Her two brothers were killed in France. She made a slave of herself—a war-slave. Red Cross work, War Savings Stamps, canteens, everything! Isn’t she to be repaid for her sacrifices? Must she marry that humdrum man she’s engaged to, and slave in the kitchen for him all the rest of her life, and have children, and—and—”

“Die eventually?” Porlamar put in. “I believe so. You’ve simply condensed the life-history of an individual. As the philosopher said to the king who wanted the story of man in one sentence: ‘Your Majesty, man is born to suffer to die!’”

“She’ll suffer more than any man!” Julie said angrily. “Don’t women always suffer most? Didn’t women batter down the old conventions—the way they went into this war and helped? The men *had* to have them! Hasn’t it put women on a freer basis?”

“Are we to backslide, to return to the old, ridiculous customs after all we’ve been through? I mean, the women of all countries—the women of America and Europe and—and Asia!”

PORLAMAR had stopped smiling; Julie was grateful for that.

“I can’t meet you on your own ground,” he said meekly, “because I haven’t your imagination—can think only in concrete terms, instances.

“Your theory is convincing, as you express it. Now let me try to clear up a point you seem to have overlooked. Have to use myself in this anecdote—if you don’t mind.

“This started in France, during the German retreat from the Argonne, with an incendiary bullet that found its way into my gas-tank. Four thousand feet up, nosing around for a pig—a *réglagé* plane.

“A Fokker dropped down, gave me a burst—put me out of commission. Pancaked and side-slipped most of the way down—into a wheat-field.

“Things were badly congested in the Argonne then. Roads jammed—lorries, ambulances, taxicabs, cook-wagons, troops, walking, wounded, prisoners. Hospitals not established.

“They got me into a battered old farmhouse—four walls—no roof. A Red Cross nurse, a girl from some little place in Indiana, was sent. She stayed. We were alone there—thirsty, half-starved, part of the time under shellfire. Man-and-man relationship. Understand?”

Julie’s mind leaped to his conclusion as she nodded.

Porlamar’s deep voice rolled on steadily.

“She was fine, like a little mother. No—a kid brother. We never dreamed of coming out alive, you see. Now, if she had lived, if I had gone back to that little town in Indiana, say a month or two afterwards, and looked her up? Do you see what I’m driving at?”

Julie wanted to ask some questions about the Red Cross nurse. Perhaps the girl hadn’t been attractive.

“In other words,” she commented, “you believe that such relationships were only temporary fixtures, torn down when the war ended, so to speak.”

Porlamar took time to answer that.

“Not entirely,” he stated. “You are right partly. At least, it seems to me you’re on the right track. Some foolish

conventions *have* been torn down. Many of them wont be put up again—thank Heaven!

"For example, women will select husbands more frankly, perhaps—not quite as frankly as you've gone about selecting a—a platonic playmate. That's possible. Men and women are apt to fall into the habit of studying and analyzing a candidate before they decide to marry.

"That would be fine, wouldn't it? Splendid! Save painful discoveries, disillusionment, trouble. The old way, pretending to be clever, or more virtuous, or more sympathetic, than one actually is, ought to lose popularity. Probably will.

"If there's one quality the men and women who've gone through that experience in France have learned to value, it's *sincerity—honesty!*"

"Don't you think I'm sincere in—doing this?" Julie interrupted him irrelevantly.

"Yes, I think you're sincere," he replied. "At first I thought differently. Thought you were a silly girl with a headful of radical ideas, running amuck, able to get away with it because you're loaded with money."

JULIE gave him a little noncommittal toss of her head, and said something in a voice too faint for him to hear. She was confused and almost indignant.

Porlamar sat up, twisted to face her, his expression so intensely serious that her mouth fell open. He spoke emphatically.

"But let's not pull down that thousand-foot fence, *querida*—at least, not between you and me. Half a girl's charm to the ordinary dub is her remoteness."

"It shouldn't be," Julie protested.

"Well, it happens to be," he said logically. "Let's take an example, an ordinary dub who has come home from war. He falls in love with a girl. Let's say he loves her in a way that is, with him, novel."

Porlamar puckered his lips.

"We'll say the dub thought he loved others before he saw her. In the past, it seems, he was anxious to tear down that fence. But after rubbing elbows with death a few times, he began losing some of his interest in what lay behind curtains.

"So he comes home from war. And he meets the girl. She's a beautiful clever girl—a thousand times too fine for him. The way he loves her is different from the way he loved any of the others.

"Doesn't care to be enlightened, though

—he's had enough enlightenment to last him a thousand years. He wants her to be—rather considerate, because he has had plenty of candor in the trenches. One of his ideas of happiness has been to have a nice, thoughtful girl sitting beside him before a fireplace—one he can talk to and get sympathy and understanding from."

"And yet," Julie put in in a disappointed tone, "some of them seem only to want more adventure—"

"They're exceptions, and the dub is one of them," Porlamar answered. "Well, he loves her partly because she is what she is—adorable; partly because she has a good, clean brain; partly because she does things impulsively sometimes; and—partly because she mystifies him. She has such a boyish, impetuous way about her!

"Just as she is, having analyzed her to that extent,—which is more than he ever analyzed a girl before,—he loves her, could fight for her—die if necessary!"

"Oh!" Julie said faintly.

Porlamar sank back again.

"But he doesn't want her removed from that pedestal. That's where she belongs."

"You told me you weren't an analyst," Julie retorted, while a vague feeling of elation overcame her.

"A man can think most clearly about the things he knows he isn't going to get," Porlamar answered.

Julie sighed. Her brown eyes were shining, and she did not remove them from his face. His mouth was terribly firm, and the furrows which were engulged by eager muscles when he talked, had reappeared. He resembled, she thought, a bronze Buddha more than ever before.

"I'm glad you realize I'm sincere," she reflected.

"And I'm glad I've changed your mind about adventuring," he said.

"Oh, but you haven't!"

He was amazed. "I haven't?"

"Because I know I can trust you."

"Tonight," he conceded.

"Any night. There are other nights. It's a long way to Tampico—and the opal mine in the Rio Mangualile!"

PORLAMAR sprang up. Julie followed, more leisurely. She was puzzled.

"I go on watch at six—"

"Maybe tomorrow—"

He ran his eyes deliberately from her little brown toque to the tips of her low shoes.

There was enough in that glance to frighten anybody, but she did not seem afraid, even when his hands dropped and began fumbling heavily on her shoulders. The glance she gave him was one of curiosity.

"Are you—trying to frighten me again?" she demanded in a trembling voice.

Porlamar seemed not to hear. His face was flushed, as red as fire-embers.

Julie made up her mind not to struggle, if he was tactless enough to carry it further. And when the weight of the hands increased—and when they went back to her shoulder blades, she offered no resistance.

She was limp when he forced her against him; her head went back on his arm.

For an instant he held her that way—so tightly that the breath was squeezed out of her upon his cheeks. His face came closer, until his eyes were swimming against hers—immense and alarming pools of sapphire.

She inhibited the impulse to scream, to beat him away, to tear at the closing eyes with her fingernails. She did not struggle as the wave of hatred swept over her; she waited, wondering if he would dare.

The massive arms trembled as his lips sank upon her throat, moved up to the hollow below her underlip, to her mouth, where they became molded hotly—bitter with the taste of the Mexican tobacco.

He relinquished her abruptly, stepping back with his arms swinging. His face was so red that the tan had all but disappeared. Hers was gray, but the burning color stole back swiftly.

She retreated until her hand caught the whaleboat cutwater.

"Say you're sorry!" she cried.

Spindrift, flung down the deck, rattled upon the blue raincoat, flew hissing across Porlamar's face and chest. His body twisted as the deck lurched and rebounded. He was grinning.

The wind tore the retort from his lips, fairly hurling the words at her. "Add—to your theory!"

CHAPTER V

AN ocean of riotous darkness seemed to be given up by the invisible waves. There were no stars, no lights of any kind. The *Tonora* might have been lifted from the sea and set helplessly adrift upon a black tide of wind.

The girl experienced a wicked self-satisfaction in letting the moist wind tear at her clothes and her hair, and in flinging her, as it did now and then, from the low hand-rail to the clammy wall of a cabin. She visualized a wind having the power to destroy her, to disintegrate limbs as well as clothing.

But the embrace was as yet too recent an adventure for its true reaction to set in. Her fury subsided at once. The incident left her only with a feeling of repugnance which, she curiously hoped, the strong wind would wash away.

She passed an open doorway pouring light in a yellow path across the deck; the path made golden bars of patches along the white railings, and gleamed fugitively on wave-tops beyond.

Captain McKay was inside, slumped down in a huge red armchair, with one forefinger indenting the rosy cheek toward her. His head was resting on his breast-bone. He was applying himself to a book with a garish green cover. He left the chair and hastened to the doorway, tossing the book upon a wrinkled white bunk.

"You'll catch your death out there," he said with a laugh. "You look half frozen. Come in."

"Aren't you busy?"

"Only reading a stale book."

He closed the door and waved her into the red armchair. Julie fixed her attention upon a glass frame on an oak panel harboring an enormous dried starfish. Adjoining this exhibit was the photographic portrait of a curly-haired woman of middle age, with a tender, soft mouth and such wistfully sad eyes as the wife of a roving sea-dog might be expected to possess.

CAPTAIN MCKAY occupied a swivel chair under the photograph and waited upon her expectantly, his hands folded over one upraised knee, his gray eyes round and twinkling.

Julie unbuttoned the raincoat and pushed it back.

"Well, I've had a talk with him," she said in a weary manner, as one refers to the performance of a duty. "He's running away from responsibilities and—opportunity." Her red lips remaining apart gave the Captain a glimpse of softly glowing beautiful teeth.

"It seems to be the habit with young men," he said. "Did you offer him a position of some sort, may I ask?"

"In a way," she replied gravely. "I suggested that he go to work instead of chasing after new thrills!"

"Porlamar's a stubborn lad," the Captain agreed. "Maybe that position didn't mean hard enough work," he added seriously. "Loves to dirty his hands. Salt o' the earth, that lad! Nothing we wouldn't do for one another, or haven't done, Miss Arthur. There's no earthly need of him sweating back aft there over that fussy old tin teakettle of a steeple-compound. I'd have turned myself out of these quarters for him in an eye-wink, berth or no berth."

Julie wondered what she had said to arouse this mild animosity. The Captain took another breath.

"Wouldn't listen to it. Loves to work!"

"Loves to drift better," she said sharply.

"Oh, of course; but I can tell you Porlamar hasn't a heart in every port!"

"Or a heart in any port, Captain?"

Captain McKay smiled. "Well, the lad always was a drifter. Always on the trail of something other people couldn't find—generally didn't care to bother to find! Any excuse for a rainbow-chase. Once it was a tiger, another time a prayer-wheel. Later on, a vanished island. Do you know what he's looking for now? Pots of gold at the end of another rainbow. An opal-mine!"

"An opal-mine up the Rio Manguale," Julie contributed warmly. She lifted her left hand. "This one came from a place not far away from it, he thinks."

Captain McKay inspected the ring without surprise.

"Not afraid of bad luck?"

Julie shook her head with a smile.

"Well, sailors are a superstitious lot. Yes; this time it's an opal-mine. Pretty soon it will be something else—a lost river in Africa, maybe. Was there anything particular in France? Glory? I don't think he cares for glory. He threw all those medals into the ocean. It changed him! What he went through in the war took the spirit out of him. He seems to have lost his youth. He's a hard one to make talk, isn't he?"

"Rather," Julie replied darkly.

The Captain's expression became mysterious. He leaned forward.

"Bet a silk hat he didn't tell you who his parents were!"

Julie lifted her sable eyebrows and said nothing.

"He doesn't know!"—a bellow of triumph. "No one does! He was a castaway—picked up on the beach above Callao—Peru, you know. A *cargador* found him floating offshore in a whaleboat from the old *Corrientes*. Heard about the *Corrientes*? Well, it was before your time, Miss Arthur. She went down somewhere between Valparaiso and Balboa. Waterspout is *my* explanation."

"Oh!" Julie murmured.

"Yes; she left Valparaiso with a deck-load of passengers for up the coast. Simply vanished! Nobody seems to have gotten off but the lad, and he was too young to remember. But he does remember the sun. He was a little shaver, not old enough to walk. Must have had a terrible time out there all alone in that open boat. Nothing to drink—shriveled to a cinder! You know what that Peruvian sun is."

Julie didn't know, but her expression was pathetic. A picture had leaped into her brain of a baby lying on its back in a whaleboat, gasping for breath through cracked, burning lips under a sun that shed its heat like the mouth of a blast-furnace.

"They couldn't identify him. Half a dozen American families with babes in arms running away from that revolution! Yes, a dozen good American families claimed him, and about a thousand others read about it in the papers and wanted to adopt him. But Jim Cunningham kept him. Ever heard of Jim Cunningham?"

THE name was vaguely familiar to Julie; that was all.

"Biggest mining engineer in South America. Jim Cunningham was one of the young mining men up at Cerro de Pasco then—up on the Bombon plateau above Callao and Lima. The company makes it a practice to send engineers down from the mines to the coast every six months or oftener. The high altitude gives them the nerves, insomnia. Fourteen thousand feet above sea level, Pasco is; and everybody up there but the Incas, the natives, who are used to the thin air, must go down to the coast to build up. There's danger of consumption too, they say.

"Well, Jim Cunningham came down to Callao one afternoon and went for a stretch up the beach beyond the town—it's a fine white beach in the form of a little horse-shoe cove—and he found the *cargador* with that little wizened bundle of hair and

bones in his arms, and the whaleboat drifting out a little distance from shore.

"Jim told me once he's never forget the look on that *cargador's* yellow face as long as he lived! Scared to death, up to his knees in the water, hugging the castaway to his chest and wondering whether he'd best turn him over to the authorities or throw him back into the boat and avoid responsibility.

"Jim said the baby was so blind from looking at the sun on the water he had to pry open his lids with his fingers. His tongue was as black as my boot. God knows how long he was drifting around in that whaleboat off Callao before the *cargador* found him! Well, Jim Cunningham always did have a reputation for sizing things up in an eye-wink—and not dallying. Snatched the baby out of the *cargador's* hands before he could say *Madre de Dios!*—which is what a spiggoty generally says under exciting circumstances.

"In Lima, any of the old-timers will swear that Jim Cunningham didn't close his eyes for ten days. Gave up his spree, found a woman with a nursing baby, and hired her to bring the castaway back from the grave. The idea of a baby dying for lack of something that a few measly *centavos* could buy made his blood boil over. Jim was a fighting man, anyway—with his fists, I mean. He *fought* that little withered-up bag of skin and bones over every inch of the way.

"When his leave was up, Jim took the youngster up to the mines. Proud as a turkey! 'Want you to see my adopted son,' he would say. 'Isn't he a perfect wonder?' I've seen women burst into tears when Jim asked them that! A *wonder!* His skin was like the bark on a tree—till the new grew in.

"Well, Jim had a fine job up at the mines—everybody said he was on his way to a superintendency. But the fourteen thousand feet of elevation didn't agree with the castaway. So down they came to Lima, leaving the finest kind of prospects behind; and Jim got himself something to do behind a desk.

"MEANWHILE kindly folks up North were cabling, offering fat rewards. I was lying in Callao discharging tinned stuff when a delegation—three women and a minister—came down from New Orleans and tried to take Jim's foundling back with them. You could have heard Jim's cussing

all the way up and down the Esplanade! Can you imagine him giving up the boy when nobody could say for sure whether his name was Smith, or Jones, or Brown?

"Jim claimed prior rights, anyway. Any court in the world would have upheld him. He told me he'd decided to send the boy through the best college in America, make him the finest mining engineer on earth. You can't say that Jim didn't try; I suppose Porlamar inherited his taste for drifting from him. Jim wouldn't give the lad his own name—robbed him of all his romance, he said, and insisted on giving him that absurd name Por-la-mar, after the way he'd been picked up on the coast. *Por-la-mar*—that's the Spanish way of saying 'By-the-sea.'

"Well, they stayed on in Lima and waited for Por-la-mar to get back his sea-legs. His vitality was all sapped out of him—took years to bring it back. Jim starved himself, went without tobacco and liquor—simply fought and starved and sacrificed himself for four or five years. He was a sight! Then one day word came down from over the Andes away inland that a new outcropping of silver had been found. A Frenchman grubstaked the two of them.

"One night in the Metropole on the Plaza in Balboa, Panama,—a fair five years after I'd seen them last,—I found Jim Cunningham sitting by himself at a little round table.

"'What are you looking so disgusted about, and how is the young one?' I asked him.

"'Sit down, Mac,' he growled. 'My son is at school in New York City. Left him there. Can't stand New York—air isn't fit for an armadillo. What will you have to drink, and where are you located now, Mac?'

"I told him I'd left the old *Barracouda* for a decent berth on the Atlantic—running from Colon to Boston, the *Dolores*. She was torpedoed in the Mediterranean without notice, as you remember reading in the papers winter before last, Miss Arthur. I wanted to know how the lad had taken to school.

"Jim said he'd fought like a cageful of wildcats. Wanted to come back with Jim. And Jim didn't blame him, as the air in New York was terrible—as damp as a graveyard. They had arranged to meet in Alaska and spend the school vacation on a spree down the Yukon. Jim

had planned a series of vacation trips. The Amazon was next, and China when the boy was all through with school.

"I've never known a real father so much in love with his son. A man generally loves what he has to fight hardest for—and Jim had fought Porlamar up from practically nothing but a heart-beat.

"Well, Jim Cunningham went down to Lima to nip a new revolution back in the hills where he'd found silver that was putting the boy through school; and I went back to the *Dolores*, at the other end of the Isthmus. We were saying *adiós* for the last time, if we'd known it.

CHAPTER VI

"**D**ID you ever stop to realize, Miss Arthur, that friends are held together by invisible strings? Friends seem to move about in circles. The world is such a big place you'd imagine a man would have about one chance in ten billions of seeing the same face twice, especially if he's traveling around—like two grains of flour ever coming together twice in the same barrel.

"It seems queer, when I look back, the way Porlamar and I ran into one another in out-of-the-way places. Every so often—purest accident. First it was San Francisco, then Hongkong, next Papeiti—always when one of us needed the other.

"Out there on the Embarcadero late one fine spring afternoon the strappingest, most forlorn-looking vagrant jumped out of the crowd and grabbed me by the elbows.

"'You're Mr. McKay!' he said. 'Don't you remember me? I'm the kid who used to play in your cabin when you came into Callao, Peru, on the *Barracouda*—ten years ago!'

"I didn't recognize him. You meet deck-loads of mighty queer characters—always wanting a dollar or two—when you've hired and fired crews for forty-odd years. It was his eyes that made me remember that starved little cripple who used to play with rope-ends in my cabin. They were the blazingest blue eyes I ever saw—just like the Gulf Stream on a hot noon. I simply couldn't believe that little shaver had grown into such a whooper of a man—with stubble standing out on his jaw like the bristles on a hairbrush.

"'What in thunder are you doing here?' I demanded. 'You're supposed to be in a

technical school at Boston, studying to be the finest mining engineer on earth. Where's Jim Cunningham?'

"'Dead,' he said, and he couldn't hold back the tears. 'See here, Mr. McKay, I want to get out of this country. You'll help me, wont you?'

"I wanted to know how Jim Cunningham had died, and when. It had been ten years since that night in the Metropole in Balboa.

"'Fell down a shaft at the Quintigal mine,' he said, winking his eyes. 'It happened three weeks ago, and—I'm through with school for good, sir!'

"I asked him if he didn't honestly intend carrying out Jim's wishes, of making himself a great engineer. He seemed astonished. Keep on going to school with Jim dead? He wanted to get as far away from school as a ship would take him. I supposed Jim had left him well off.

"'Over a million,' he growled, 'and I don't intend laying hands on a red penny of it. What ship are you on? Wont you take me away from here?'

"I told him he could go decking on the *San Felipe* if he was that anxious. We were clearing in the morning with a load of cotton-mill machinery for Suchau, China. But I was sorry about his schooling. A boy can't get far these days without a good education, and somehow I didn't have much faith in that million Jim had left him. He would have given it away on some foolish excuse. He hated it, because he had an idea that it was the last few hundred thousand that had killed Jim Cunningham—that Quintigal mine.

"'Sign me on for Suchau,' he begged me. 'Jim is dea' Who else is there to care?'

"**W**ELL, I signed him on for Suchau, feeling pretty certain he intended to quit when he reached China. Which he did, immediately. He came aboard the afternoon we anchored with a strange-looking yellow-haired vagrant—a Yangtze River engineer, who wanted him to go up the river as his first assistant. They had lost a tow-barge somewhere between Chungking and Hanyang; and the excitement of hunting for something in dangerous waters was more than my green deck-hand could stand.

"Have I said that Porlamar was always looking for something? I think that tow-barge was the beginning. Next it was a

lost Thibetan prayer-wheel. I heard all about *that* in Hongkong. He confessed that he had quit the yellow-haired engineer at Chungking and joined a caravan of merchants bound for India. But some one somewhere along the route sidetracked him long before they reached the pass through the Himalayas. I don't know how he got into Lassa; he never mentioned it, and it's not supposed to be possible.

"One night—one of those thick South China nights—I came down from visiting a friend in the hospital on the Peak—Hongkong, that is—in a sedan chair. When we reached the jetty an argument began about the charges. Those South China fellows will overcharge a white man *invariably*, if there isn't an Indian policeman handy.

"The discussion concerned a matter of fifty cents, Mex. Only a quarter, gold, to be sure, but I wouldn't let them rob me of a punched brass *cash* if I could help it. Well, you never saw so many pigtailed or heard so much jabbering in one spot in your life! The whole harbor-front was gathering around, when all at once a Sikh, a giant fellow with a red turban coiled around his head, burst through that pack.

"The light was poor, and I caught just one peep of a pair of mad blue eyes, but I didn't recognize him then, not just then. That disguise was perfect, even to the way he carried his head with that absurd turban.

"'What seems to be the trouble here?' he yelled at me—in perfect English. 'Are these river-pigs annoying you, sir?'

"He didn't wait for an answer, simply threw up his arms and let loose a shout you could have heard all the way to Causeway Bay—it was pure West River dialect, or pure Mandarin—and you should have seen those pigtailed standing out horizontally! If there's anything a Chink fears, aside from his paternal ancestors, it's one of those towering, solemn, red-turbaned Sikhs!

"Next minute that big Indian had his arms around me. 'I need you, Mac,' he said. 'There is a delegation on its way here from Canton, and they don't like the way I wear my clothes. Where's your ship? I'll hail a sampan.'

"I didn't catch my breath till we were a quarter of the way across the harbor, headed for Kowloon. I told the coolie where my ship was lying, and then I asked Porlamar what in the name of Confucius

had happened to that lost tow-barge up the Yangtze-kiang.

"'Nobody will ever find that tow-barge,' he said, 'because it isn't there. We went over every square inch of the river bottom from Suchau to Lu with grappling-hooks. Lately I've been chasing a prayer-wheel that vanished from the big Lassa temple—*via* Mongolia. But it went out the other way—*via* Afghanistan. Then some one penetrated my disguise. But I haven't got the damned thing. And I'm broke. Have to go decking again.'

"'Some day,' I told him, 'I'm coming to you for help. Have you used up much of that money Jim Cunningham left you?'

"'Not a dime,' he said. 'It's Jim's, not mine.'

"'It's yours legally,' I denied.

"'Some day I'll probably use it—to good purpose,' he answered. 'Is that your ship out there—that Jap?'

"'The *Shimaro Maru*,' I told him. 'I am teaching the Japs how to navigate steamboats.' That was before the Japs put their own men in place of the white officers. 'We're going to Singapore. If you haven't any money, I'll have to pay your passage; we use natives only in the crew.'

"Some day, he said, he would pay it all back. Aside from Jim Cunningham, he was more in debt to me than any man who ever befriended a nameless orphan. He said he'd never visited Singapore, though the place was on his list. As a matter of fact he didn't care where he went, as long as he could be free—foot-loose.

"Porlamar was always like that," the Captain interrupted himself.

"Irresponsible?" Julie murmured, feeling a new undercurrent in his thoughts.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN McKAY nodded energetically.

"Doesn't care. Isn't thoughtful. You could compare him to a ship broken loose from her moorings—drifting till something bad happens.

"And he had fallen into the habit of risking his life for things that weren't—well, vital. He went up the Iriwadi, starting from Penang in a Malay proa with a lateen-sail—that is, after he tired of Singapore, which he did immediately.

And he left his Malayans at Pakokku, or some such place, to help beat the brush for—was it an elephant or a royal tiger? It was something that sensible people wouldn't have bothered about. In Papeiti it was a sunken island—under the 'purple eye of Tonga.' Covered with pearls! You could drop a bucket and bring 'em up by the quart—if you found the island! But he helped me then. Oh, you can't say he's ungenerous—he's as generous as a heart!

"It was about a year after I dropped him off at Singapore,—put him up with a week's board and lodgings, paid in advance, at Raffles,—that the *Shimaro Maru's* owners gave me my notice. Put a Jap in my berth at Kobe. A fat little Dutchman with curly red hair chased me down the Bund and '*Mynheer*' me in Java Dutch! It seemed he owned a schooner, and his skipper skipped. Was I willing to gamble and go thirds?

"Well, half a ship is better than none. And he *looked* miserable. So we carried bale-silk and Jap *soey* and *saki* and tea from Moji and Nagasaki to Sidney, then decided to pick up ivory, copra and mother of pearl in the Solomon Islands and land it at a big profit in San Francisco. Trading, of course—everything from wrist-compasses to shotguns.

"Well, we cleared Malaita bulging with pearl-shells and copra, figuring up our profits, and figuring we were *very* rich men! And when we crawled into Papeiti after three weeks of hurricanes, we needed re-outfitting from stem to stern! I'm not exaggerating. Everything gone but the cargo and our masts—stores, railing, hatch-covers—oh, everything! And no money. Nothing to sell—in Papeiti!

"Then we thought our luck had turned. Tobey, a pirate of a ship-chandler and a shipwright of sorts, offered to fit us out all over, payment for the new parts and stores to be cabled on delivery of our cargo in San Francisco. That was *his* suggestion, mind you. But when we were ready to sail, he changed his mind. Decided he wanted his money *then*. Cash in the palm of the hand. Couldn't possibly wait.

"On a blistering afternoon, with only enough wind for bare steerageway, even outside, Van Vleet and I had come ashore to say good-by to Tobey and thank him from the bottom of our hearts. Had our clearance-papers, mind you, signed—all ready to hoist anchor and away!

"That pirate was waiting for us under

the big red awning in front of his shop, picking his teeth with a dried fish-bone. He didn't notice my hand; declared he wanted the five hundred and eighty dollars immediately. We thought he was joking at first, naturally; and then I went faint. I *told* him he was joking.

"'No,' said Tobey, 'I haf chan' my min'.'

"Well! Poor old Van Vleet simply toppled over into a chair and began fanning himself like mad with the clearance-papers. He said '*Mynheer* Tobey—' a dozen times, but he gave it up. Couldn't find words powerful enough to carry him along.

"I told Tobey he wouldn't *dare* hold us up.

"He advised me to try leaving Papeiti and find out. And there was that schooner lying out in the blue bay, growing more beautiful every moment, with snowy sails waiting to go up, and the open sea as inviting as an ocean of sapphires!

"**T**OBEBY was beyond arguments and threats. Had the port authorities on his side absolutely—that's maritime law, you know. When you can't settle for the things you've taken on in port, and you can't reach a gentleman's agreement, your ship's enjoined.

"That horrible afternoon! It *was* horrible—like finding yourself left behind in a strange port, with no friends or money. **There** we were—marooned, with a fortune bulging under our nice new hatch covers—a fortune, C. I. F. the Embarcadero, San Francisco!

"Then we heard somebody shouting. We all looked round, and saw a young giant, as brown as a berry, racing down the middle of the white road, waving his hands. He was wearing a white cotton undershirt and a pair of sail-cloth pants. No shoes—bareheaded! My first thought was a beach-comber full of gin *bijt*.

"He came stumbling up all out of breath, and those Gulf Stream eyes were snapping with joy! Began explaining between puffs that he'd only heard fifteen minutes ago that it was my yacht lying offshore. 'Mac,' he panted, 'get me off this blasted island. I'm in a hurry to go—big hurry!' Then he saw that something was wrong.

"I told him. 'This *orang-gila*,' I said, shaking my fist under Tobey's fat nose, 'is going to seize our schooner if we can't produce five hundred and eighty dollars, gold—*skalli!* We're on the beach!'

"WELL, Porlamar was in the same boat —didn't have a South Sea dollar to his name. I asked him delicately if the money Jim Cunningham had left him was still in cold storage. He said it was and that he'd starve before he touched a cent of it. Then he changed his mind. This was different. I was a friend of Jim's. It would be all right.

"He told me he'd cable the administrator of the estate on one condition: I must take the schooner a few thousand miles out of our way and drop him off at Rarotonga, in the Tubuai Islands. A friend of his, he went on to explain, was waiting for him at Rarotonga, or Mangaia, with a sloop, or was when last heard from.

"Drop me off at Rarotonga, on Mangaia, wherever Bob happens to be, and we'll call the deal square. I'll make it an even thousand. You might have to lay in at Honolulu and fit her out all over again, you know, if your luck doesn't change!"

"I wanted to know what deviltry he was up to in Rarotonga. He said he was looking for an island that had vanished, but that would I please not be flippant and ask him where or when he last saw it, because the joke was wearing thin? He was as serious as a storm-warning. There were known to be pearls by the millions where the island had gone down, and that while he had only its approximate latitude and longitude, it would be a comparatively simple thing to find. Had I, by any chance, ever heard of the purple eye of Tonga?"

"I confessed my ignorance, so he explained in vivid detail that this wonderful purple eye of Tonga was a mysterious circular spot of brilliant purple which appeared in the water occasionally and had been seen at sunset by the islanders at least a dozen times in the past year and a half.

"The purple eye of Tonga was as round as a dollar, about a mile across; and if you dropped anchor at its precise center you would fetch up pearls by the basketful.

"You'll be joining a betel-nut colony next,' I warned him. 'Why don't you leave these South Sea *kampong* fables to the raving maniacs who invent them? Stop this nonsense, lad, and settle down to respectability on some decent ship. You are always hunting for something that no person with a grain of intelligence would bother to cross the street to inquire about.'

"He wasn't pleased with that, seemed more interested in what the waves were

saying on the beach. 'Some day, Mac,' he said in a dreamy voice, staring past the schooner to the horizon, 'I'm going to surprise you by finding it.'

"I told him it didn't exist except in the feverish brain of a gin-*bijt* drunkard, and to stop talking such twaddle.

"He said I had misunderstood him: he wasn't referring to the lost island under the purple eye, but to something grander. The lost island, like the tow-barge, and the prayer-wheel, and the tiger, were only stepping-stones. He couldn't describe it, only it was enormous and wonderful.

"Laddie,' I said, 'you're only giving excuses to a selfish, roving whim. You'll never find that enormous and wonderful thing, even if you chase these pots o' gold at the rainbow's end for a thousand years. We try all our lives to catch up with it, and none of us has ever caught up with it yet, because it's impossible to put your fingers on a mirage.'

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTAIN MCKAY stopped to blow violently upon a handkerchief, watching Julie anxiously over the small billow of linen.

Sitting stiffly upright in her chair, the girl gave a long sigh.

"Wouldn't you suppose he'd realize that the longer he chases mirages, the more disappointed and discontented he is *bound* to become?" she cried.

The Captain nodded.

"He ought to have found plenty of excitement on the battlefield. But he *has* changed, Miss Arthur. And he realizes it. Do you know what he told me when he came aboard yesterday and said I simply *had* to get him out of this country? He said: 'Mac, I am sick of life. What is there left for me to do?'

"You mean, you're sick of your everlasting selfishness, lad,' I told him. 'You've been fighting for a cause. You *were* happy in France, weren't you?'

"Yes; he admitted he'd been happy in France. Only time in his life since Jim Cunningham died, he said. Oh, he understood why. He knew it was because he was doing some practical good—bringing happiness to some one besides himself. So I wanted to know then, if he had at last put his finger on the difficulty, why he was going back to the old aimless wandering.

"No more causes to fight for," he said. "War's over."

"There *are* causes worth fighting for!" Julie protested indignantly. "There's Russia—the new Belgium, France—our own country—"

"Peru," Captain McKay supplemented firmly. "Porlamar is nearly thirty-three—as close as anybody can judge. He should be going back there now. They'd remember Jim Cunningham's boy. Conditions are bad in Peru now—in fact, all up and down that coast. Strong-thinking men are needed. The mine has been neglected for the past fifteen years. What a fight it would be to bring that mine back to life—like the one Jim put up when he brought Porlamar back to life! What woman, if she was the right sort, wouldn't be glad to go down there and fight beside a man with the stuff in him that Porlamar has got!"

Julie's thoughts momentarily were wandering afield. She found that she had been brooding unwittingly for the past few minutes upon the photographic portrait of the wistful, sad-eyed woman depending from the shining brass hooks.

Something vague but stirring had happened to the woman in the photograph since Julie had first glanced at it; the visitation had come from within herself, reflecting a dismaying new aspect.

She wondered if life was intended to be as baffling and tangled as some of the Captain's revelations upon that broad, absorbing subject seemed to imply. She compared it with quicksilver pregnant with a restless, urgent force, taxing one's powers to grasp, to keep abreast of. The idea developed alarmingly. Life never grew tired; it was you who were worn down by the breathless struggles, the sharp adjustments, as the process repeated itself tirelessly. Wasn't life humorous, in fact, mocking, in the attitude it took toward youth? Wasn't it *always* young and boisterous? Wasn't it youth that suffered and grew bitter and fatigued and old?

THE little white face under the brown toque was tired and perplexed. Julie's fingers drooped listlessly over the ends of the smooth chair-arms. Her head was tilted to one side with an air of weariness.

Her lips compressed in a hard red line.

"I can't understand him," Julie said truthfully, in a faint voice, as if she were addressing herself. "A man with his fortune could do so much—wonderfully *con-*

structive things. Yes. That mine at Quintal. Doesn't the world need silver?"

Julie was only half aware herself that her views on the subject of adventuring had undergone a sharp chemical change, that they were already crystallizing out negatively.

"If Jim's money wasn't all gone," the Captain modified.

"Lost?" she exclaimed, sitting up anxiously.

"Well—Armenia, Belgium—hm!" Captain McKay said, clearing his throat noisily. "*He* wouldn't spend it."

"He is noble!" Julie burst out, suddenly misty-eyed, and added rather pathetically: "Poor fellow!"

Captain McKay wagged his gray head pathetically too, but became his blustery self again as Julie got up from the red chair.

"Old men love to reminisce so!" he murmured in an apologetic voice. "Next time, though, when you have a talk with the lad—"

"I'll have my bearings, Captain!" Julie concluded with a grateful smile.

She glanced at the square nicked clock above the walnut desk as she moved toward the door. It said a quarter past three.

"You've picked a bad time of the year to travel, Miss Arthur," he added formally, as he held open the door against the wind. "We're scheduled to run into heavier weather still farther south, if the Arlington wireless warnings are right. Sparks was telling me at supper the South Atlantic is kicking up. Typhoon season is on in the Gulf, you know. Lucky you happen to be such a good sailor!"

Julie hastened down the careening deck to her stateroom; and the spray-soaked wind which assailed her hair and skirts and tore the breath from her in frightened gulps was no longer a moody companion spirit but an old and ardent enemy.

As she flung open the door, a sound like that of thunder rolled upward from the bows, was devoured by the storm. The entire skeleton of the ship seemed to buckle, and commenced giving off booming, popping noises—the result of the strain and the unexpected check.

The cabin lifted up with a deep groan and sank back again to squeak and rattle. The air was cold and black, filled with foam. During a fugitive lull in the gale she heard clearly the patient throbbing of

the propeller-blades—out of water, beating against air, she supposed, for the bows were negotiating another mountain.

JULIE undressed with haste, put on her nightgown, extinguished the pulsing light and crept to her bunk, where she settled down, with her back to the chilly vibrant wall, her warm knees drawn up and clasped under her chin. Although during the past forty hours she had not slept, her brain was wakeful, filled with the vivid clarity that often follows bodily exhaustion.

It fastened itself upon a picture, one which would not be displaced—the one standing out with most color from Captain McKay's pictorial narrative, that of a lean and bronzed young giant, racing down the middle of the palm-bordered Tahitian road, waving his brown hands, and clad in the fraying dirty white of a beach-comber, a black-sander, with the red awning of Tobey's in the background, an agitated fat Dutchman fanning himself madly with a handful of papers, and the indigo of the Southern Pacific beyond!

The Purple Eye of Tonga! What a fantasy! A few hours earlier she had fairly shivered with ecstasy at the mouth-ing of such romantic phrases. The Valley of Blue Fire!

What had happened? Even the *Tonora* had been robbed of her glamour. Julie was considering the venerable cargo-boat with antipathy now—an antiquity, hardly fit to put to sea in such violent weather—trumpeting down the sea-lanes like a staggering old lady on a spree—ready for the boneyard!

Julie was a little skeptical of Captain McKay's philosophy: it mitered too neatly with the facts, as if it were hand-made for the occasion; and it contrasted too sharply with the events of his own roving life. Yet he had gone to sea and he had followed the sea for a purpose; and it was excusable—he loved Porlamar, wanted to see him start life properly, at her expense, to be sure. That was what women were for. To bring the adventurer back to norm would mean a fight, a hard, yes, a splendid fight, perhaps. Years—bitterness. It might mean in the end throwing herself away, the whole effort wasted and lost. Far easier and less complicated to return to New York and forget!

She was profoundly disturbed to find that Porlamar no longer fired her romantic

imagination. In France he had been a Galahad. In his present undertaking he was quixotic.

Julie was shivering with the damp cold. She got up to open the window and raise the shutter, then crawled in between the sheets, stretching out and relaxing with a luxurious sigh. The small of her back and the calves of her legs throbbled with excruciating pain. She listened uneasily to the chattering of the woodwork, the rolling grumble of the waves, the rattle of the rigging, and in the infrequent calms, to the faithful pulse of the "old tin teakettle of a steeple-compound."

She had imagined herself to be too exhausted for sleep, but a weighty drowsiness began stealing over her body, as if masses of thick blankets were being piled upon her. She felt jumpy, was preyed upon by an unaccountable distemper.

Eyes of Oriental blue, like the mysterious purple eye of Tonga, spread into the clattering darkness, glared at her—and the brackish taste of Mexican leaf tobacco haunted the roots of her tongue.

It *had* been cowardly and detestable of him. She moistened her lips, closed her eyes and shivered. A fresh, clear and more alarming problem caught her attention. What became of the aimless adventurers when they grew old? Sailors' homes? Poorhouses? Quicklime?

A streak of dismal gray fell across her eyelids. She awoke to the consciousness of a queer new notion. The *Tonora* seemed to have lost headway, and was rolling deadily.

Julie glanced at her wrist watch, sprang out of bed and lowered the window-shutter. It was nearly two in the afternoon! Rain was hissing across the screen door. The deck was a puddle. Gray clouds sailed low upon the sea.

CAPTAIN MCKAY, in glistening black rubber from hat to boots, was descending the ladder from the pilot-house. He looked worn and anxious,—a worried old man,—although he waved to her cheerfully.

"Anything the matter?" she called.

He nodded brusquely, with one hand on his stateroom doorknob, the other lifted to indicate generally the after part of the ship. Julie after an interval heard angry sounds of metal upon other metal, being yielded up from the quarters of the steeple-compound.

"Engine-trouble. We're lying to," he explained. "Some gasket or other cracked—worn out. Port engineer's fault. Should have inspected her properly. There's no danger. We can lie here for a week. Gives us all a rest."

Julie nodded. She noticed that the deck was no longer shipping heavy water, only an occasional "lipper" which swam by and flattened. The ship had adjusted herself naturally to a comfortable position, rolling deeply but not violently, drifting, and leaving astern a broad trail of crude-oil slick, under which the waves dived as if they were encountering a steel film stretched tightly over the uneasy surface.

"Shall I have your tiffin sent up now? Had the steward keep a hot plateful for you. If you haven't anything to do this afternoon, Miss Arthur, just help yourself to the bookcase in my cabin."

JULIE was dressed when the porter came to her door with a napkin-covered tray which discharged delicious odors of hot meat and coffee, and which she attacked with the enthusiasm of a starved young animal.

She felt fresh, rebuilt, high-spirited. The mirror provided her with a face different from the gaunt, distressed one of three-thirty in the morning. Her cheeks were blooming; her eyes were dewy and restful.

During her long sleep last night's array of bewildering impressions had been sorted and fixed in their proper places; she had adjusted herself to them nicely, in fact, had torn her mind wholly from the old decision and fitted it to the new one; and she found that there was no relief so soul-satisfying as that furnished by a mind which has arrived at an unqualified decision.

The candid reasoning at the beginning of a new day, when the faculties are refreshed and balanced, which assays and often rejects the brilliant promises made on an evening of exhaustion—like the cruel, unrelenting tests following a chemical discovery—revealed to Julie, as she reviewed them, no flaws of great importance.

Her new attitude toward the adventurer was inflexible. Her new attitude toward herself remained unaltered. She had adjusted herself thoroughly to a reversed viewpoint. Even the *Tonora* had gone to

great pains in bearing her out—almost uncalled-for lengths—in proving her antiquity, although, to be sure, even a brand-new engine could break down in such a storm as that which had ceased within the last few hours.

The "tin teakettle" was unable to resume its labors until after ten o'clock that evening.

CHAPTER IX

MIDNIGHT—the freighter's bows were again booming under the impact of brutal head-seas, and her rigging was humming under the stream of a steady head-wind.

Julie girded herself for the decision with Porlamar by slipping into her blue raincoat, knotting a veil about her hair and powdering her little nose. She intended to have it out with him swiftly. No more dilly-dallying, no more idle theorizing. Her proposition was as clear to her as a sunlit morning; she had only a few arguments. The battle would be won or lost inside of five minutes.

The trip aft was hazardous. She clung to the rail, fighting every foot of the way until she reached the whaleboat which confronted the engine-room doorway. Here she stopped, swinging to the davit-guy. The opal on her middle-finger burned mistily—green and orange. Her heart was beating wildly as the storm—that old mad refrain. The wind, despite its velocity, seemed warmer; and she supposed they were somewhere near the Gulf Stream.

A man suddenly leaped out of the darkness aft, pounced upon the doorknob, glanced at her dumbly over his shoulder and hastened below.

The door flew open a few minutes after his descent.

It was Porlamar. He was capless, and he looked hot and miserable. He saw her and crossed the windy space.

"Come to the Captain's cabin," she said. "Must talk to you."

Porlamar dropped his nearest ear to her lips. "Can't hear you—the wind."

"Captain's cabin!" Julie shouted.

"Oh! Captain want me?"

"No—I do!"

He shook his head. "No use!"

Julie fairly screamed into his ear: "I am not going any farther than Tampico—"

"That's better!" He twisted his face

in order to explore her expression, as if he were skeptical.

"—unless you will change your plans and reopen that mine of Jim Cunningham's. Will you?"

PORLAMAR'S mouth whitened. "McKay's been talking to you!"

"Yes! He has!" Julie cried. "I want you to go back to the mine at Quintigal—with me—my capital—fight that mine back to life the way Jim Cunningham fought you back when he found you there on the—"

"Wont listen!" He was dismayed, stubborn.

"If you're determined to waste the rest of your life hunting lost tow-barges and vanished islands, I can't stop you! Yes! I want you to stop!"

"No use! Don't try!" His voice in her ear was harsh, a tuneless vibration.

Julie seized his arm angrily. "A man who loves a girl, generally does what she asks him to. Want me to beg? Want me to *have* to say I love you?"

He stopped her in desperation: "You must not!"

"I do!" Julie cried. "Intend telling you so! Love you with all my heart! Aren't you glad—*glad* to find a woman willing to fight beside you—wont lie down and quit? Knows what she's going into? Aren't you glad to find that kind of a woman, Porlamar?"

"Don't want to hear it!" he broke in violently. "You can't mean that! Must not mean that! Nothing you can do. Don't spoil your life. I am running away. Don't come back here—again!"

Julie's heart sank down, commenced delivering solid, sledge-hammering blows upon her ribs. She was crying, but neither of them took notice of it.

She tossed back her head: "All right! You wont keep me waiting—long!"

A burst of wind threw her against him as if she were a straw. Her hands clawed at his shoulders. A wave of bitterness washed over her. She was heartsick.

Porlamar remained stiffly irresolute, trembling; then his arms strengthened in a sudden clasp. His white face was laboring. His lips, cold and wet with spindrift, felt for her mouth.

He scarcely touched her lips—flung her away.

Julie caught herself, balancing terrified at the rail. Hot tears dripped down with

the sharp spray slashing her cheeks, her numbed lips. He was immovable, selfish, brutal. Didn't care enough to try. The Buddhistic calm had stolen swiftly into his expression, like an awful shadow, streaked with the furrows of egotism.

A SHRILL warning shout pealed out forward. Porlamar turned his glazed eyes, wheeled anxiously all the way round and saw the wave rolling down, reaching clear across the deck, as black as a wave of boiling tar, with a crust of flaked silver along its edge.

He went knee-deep, hip-deep.

The deck shuddered, wailed, declined—flung itself yelpingly free of the climbing monster. He was visited by a blur of utter bewilderment. He sprang shouting to the rail, drenched, clawing savagely at the whaleboat's cutwater.

His brain seemed to spin with madness, to split with a thin terrible impression—a white hand, fingers clawing at the rail—snatched back!

"Man overboard!"

Bells were clanging. A man leaped toward him, slid, struck his head on the side of the whaleboat, spun about crazily, sprawled, and jumped to his feet, screeching.

"Night like this! You fool! Not a chance! Here! Stop! My—*God!* *Ma-a-a-an* o'erboard!"

It was Captain McKay.

CHAPTER X

PORLAMAR shot up to the surface with a million air-bubbles—the welter from the propeller. An avalanche of boiling foam bore him down again. He gulped a strangling mouthful of air and water.

The inevitable reward for that dive from the rail had been as brilliant before his eyes as if it were etched by lightning. No one could last a half-hour in the Atlantic on such a night. Death leaped at him with every sightless wave. He could see nothing—he was in blackness, a raging, ravenous darkness.

But somewhere in that thundering roil astern she was fighting for life—*drowning!*

A savage energy leaped into him, shot the fury of an overwhelming superhuman strength into his threshing limbs. He would reach her—or fight onward until he

collapsed. He was embarking on the greatest pursuit—and the last adventure.

He was thrown back to flounder in pitiless troughs, to gain new breath, new steam, to forge on, trying as he beat back to estimate how far she might have drifted. A spectral radiance burst against the cloud-bank. A ray of light stabbed beyond him, flicked a spinning wave-top.

The freighter was coming about, probably, with searchlight playing.

His lungs were filling. Not a fighting chance in the Atlantic tonight!

Once he was tossed from a wave, all out of water, hurled sidewise, his back wrenched. He made his final decision with grimly set teeth. If she was lost he too would be lost.

The glimmering efulgence in the clouds was refracted downward. A spot of soft white, oval, appeared in a sliding wave, dropped away, like a remote star obscured by drifting fog.

He dipped his face again, aimed for the place, clawed on with his body half out of water. A faint cry above the wind struck his ears as his head bobbed up. He broke down a toppling barricade.

"Floating?" he shouted in a strangling voice.

The answer came back clear: "Hurry!"

HE swam to her, found her hand, pulled it upon his neck. He ducked under, tore off his shoes. That made it easier.

The water was warm. Porlamar was beginning to notice the trivial things; yet out of them all emerged that impression, a little white hand which had found its way out of his brain into his heart, with a foolish, triumphant refrain produced sub-consciously: "*Gracias a Dios! Gracias a Dios!*" The wind accompanied it—pipes of an enormous organ.

She was crying across the inches to him. He caught fragments—"Tried—choking!"

Too exhausted to be of help, Julie clung to the solid shoulder as it moved off toward the metallic life-ring upon which the red beacon was flaring. The dazzling tongue of red light seemed to creep to them as each wave lifted it, giving out a shrill hissing as the powder-charge burned.

When it floated within reach, a lull descended, like a heavenly benediction; a darkened wall, as if a curtain had been lowered, pierced by swimming lights, had shut off the wind.

"We're in the lee of her!" he shouted.

They clung breathlessly to the buoy, the wind shouting far over their heads. The stench of crude-oil followed.

"Putting over the oil-bags," he told her. "Whaleboat'll be here in a jiffy!"

His right arm was around her shoulder.

"I thought you were gone!" he groaned. "Back in those waves—the things I found out! Wont let you go now! God, no! never!" He was exultant. "*Gracias a Dios*—and I intended going down myself!"

JULIE lifted her head. Her eyes were red; her lips were white, and her little nose was blue; she was not very beautiful to behold.

His glance filled with adoration.

"Not going to run away any more?"

"Look at me!"

The red light brilliant upon his features failed to chisel out of them a satyric resemblance, or could she say that he longer bore comparison to a bronze Buddha? It was profoundly elated, eager. Something seemed to have been lifted out of him, back there.

He dropped his eyes to stare at her right hand—yes, it had been her right hand. He examined her left, then, to verify a curious discovery. The opal ring was gone—tumbling upon weeds hundreds of fathoms down, where it belonged.

"Going to Peru—you and I."

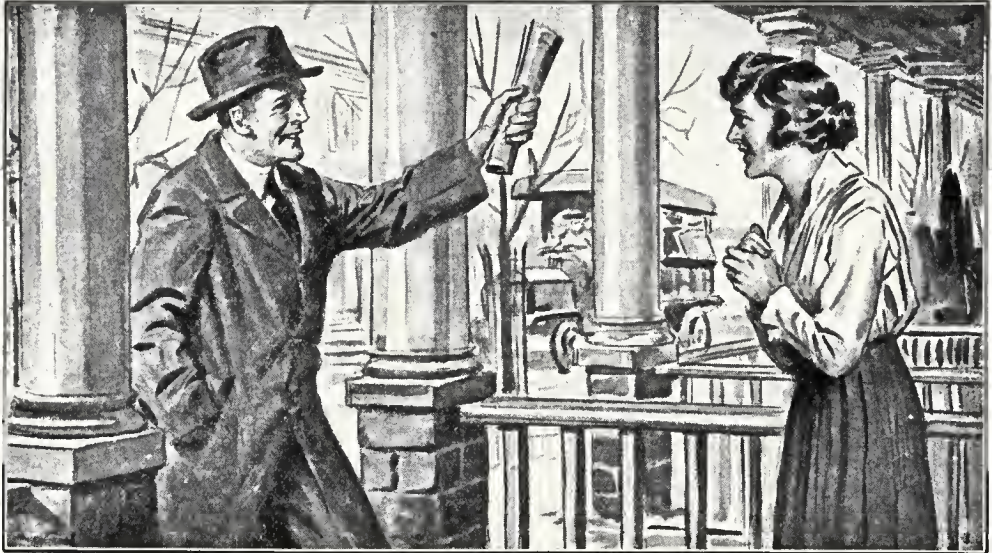
"Giving up all your adventuring?" Julie cried hysterically.

His reply came to her with a rise in the wind, like a song of joy.

"Not much! Just found the only worthwhile adventure. That's *living!*"

He looked so happy, and changed, that tears came into Julie's eyes. Her ears were singing; and she would faint, she was perfectly aware, the instant they pulled her into the whaleboat. But that didn't matter. Life *was* kind, after all—wasn't mocking in the attitude it took toward youth! Theirs to do with as they pleased! They would be pals, anyway!

The oil-slick was sliding toward them, relinquishing an overpowering odor. The whaleboat was being disentangled from the falls. Oars were flashing redly. Captain McKay, standing in the stern, was shouting at them through a brown-paper megaphone, although his ululations weren't very clear and probably not very vital. One of them, at least, didn't mind—she was unconscious.



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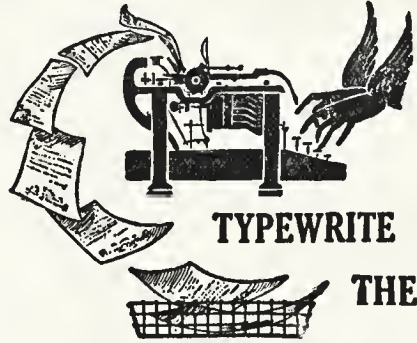
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All our readers should write her at once and she will tell you absolutely free about her various new beauty treatments and will show our readers:

- How to remove wrinkles in 8 hours;
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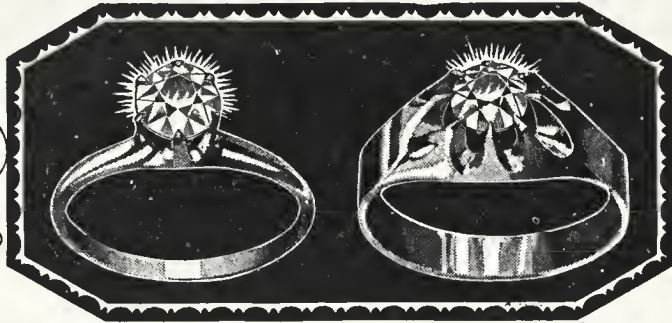
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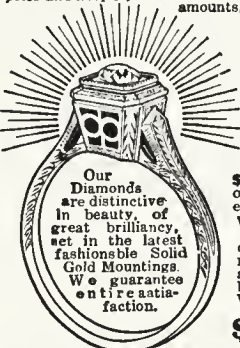
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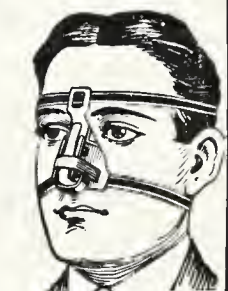


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Tobacco Steals from You the Pleasures, Comforts, Luxuries of Life

Tobacco Habit Banished In 48 to 72 Hours

Immediate Results

Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is a losing fight against heavy odds, and means a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take **Tobacco Redeemer** according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff—**Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

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Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

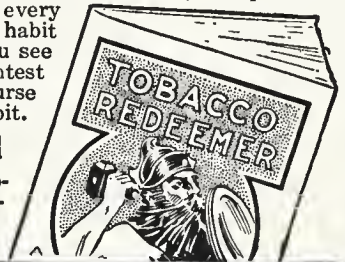
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A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

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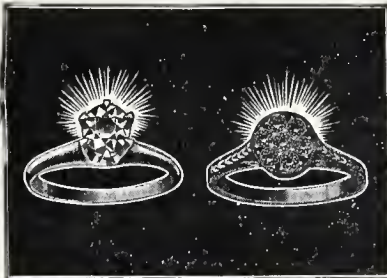
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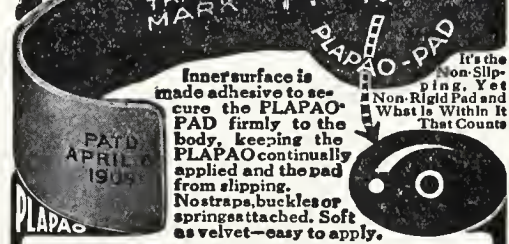
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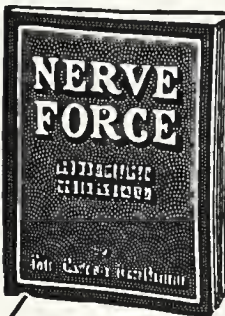


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WALTER PRICHARD EATON thinks crows are just about the wisest of man's animal acquaintances; and when you've read his captivating crow-story "Good Old Jim" in the March RED BOOK, you'll be inclined to agree with him.

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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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The Red Book Corporation, Publisher, 36 So. State St., Chicago

The Brunswick Method of Reproduction



These ideas won So many friends for The Brunswick

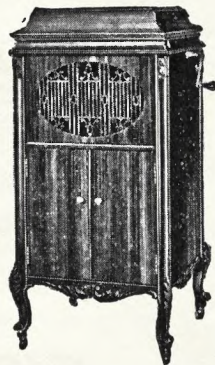
Nearly every make of phonograph plays but its own make of records. To offset this limitation some makeshifts are offered.

But it was Brunswick's happy opportunity to present to musical America that remarkable creation: The Ultona.

This all-record reproducer plays each make of record exactly as it should be played. At the turn of a hand it presents the right needle and diaphragm for each make of record.

No restrictions now

The Ultona focused the attention of the music lovers everywhere upon the Brunswick Method of Reproduction. And people learned also of the Brunswick Tone Amplifier, another betterment. It is made entirely of wood, avoiding the cast-metal throat which has long been common practice.



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We now offer Brunswick Records. They, too, set new standards. For we include all the standards of fine record making, yet add a missing element. We mean by this that each Brunswick Record is made under the personal supervision of a noted director. Thus we unite the talent of the artist with the genius of the composer. This brings a new significance into recording and you will note, as you hear Brunswick Records, that we bring something better. Remember Brunswick Records will play on any phonograph with steel or fibre needle.

Before deciding *which* phonograph and *which* record hear those bearing the name of the House of Brunswick.

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Dental Facts

Which Everyone Should Know

All Statements Approved by High Dental Authorities

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The cause of most tooth troubles is a slimy film. It is ever-present, ever forming. You can feel it with your tongue.

That is what discolors—not the teeth. It is the basis of tartar. It holds food substance which ferments and forms acid. It holds the acid in contact with the teeth to cause decay.

Millions of germs breed in it. They, with tartar, are the chief cause of pyorrhoea.

Brushing Doesn't End It

That film is clinging. It enters crevices and stays. Ordinary brushing methods leave much of it intact. Month after month the film remains and may do a ceaseless damage.

That is why so many brushed teeth discolor and decay.

Dentists long have realized that ordinary cleaning methods were inadequate. They have sought a film combatant. Now, after years of research, science has supplied it.

Able authorities have amply proved its efficiency. Leading dentists everywhere are urging its adoption. And now millions of teeth are daily cleaned in this effective way.

A Trial Tube to Everyone

For Home use this method is embodied in a dentifrice called Pepsodent. And, to show its results, a trial tube is sent to all who ask.

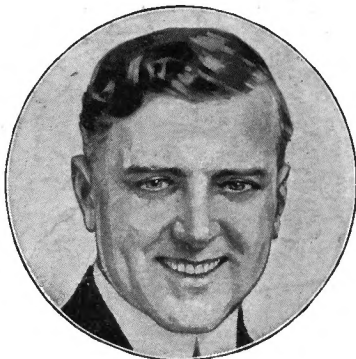
Pepsodent is based on pepsin, the digestant of albumin. The film is albuminous matter. The object of Pepsodent is to dissolve it, then to day by day combat it.

But this logical method long seemed impossible. Pepsin must be activated, and the usual agent is an acid harmful to the teeth. Now science has discovered a harmless activating method. And now active pepsin can be constantly applied.

The results are quickly told by a test. We urge you to make it, and the book we send will tell the reason for them.

Pepsodent PAT. OFF.
REG. U.S.
The New-Day Dentifrice

A scientific tooth paste which leading dentists all over America now urge for daily use



See the Effects in Ten Days

Send the coupon for a 10-Day Tube. Then note how clean the teeth feel after using. Mark the absence of the slimy film. See how teeth whiten as the fixed film disappears.

Compare the results with your old methods. Then let your own teeth decide the method best for you and yours. Cut out the coupon now.

289

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Drink
Coca-Cola
TRADE MARK
REGISTERED
DELICIOUS and REFRESHING

